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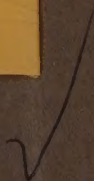
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Garden varieties **STORAGE**

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GARDEN VARIETIES

KENYON NICHOLSON

GARDEN VARIETIES

SIX ONE-ACT PLAYS
AND A BURLESQUE
FOR LITTLE THEATERS

BY

KENYON NICHOLSON



812
7152

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
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TO
STUART WALKER

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WHITE ELEPHANTS

(Initial Performance)

By the Huguenot Players, New Rochelle, New York

With the following cast:

LARRY Donald Gould

FLO Della Hoffman

ALBERT Seymour Baum

IRENE Evelyn Bridger

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF WALTER HARTWIG

Copyright, 1921, by THE SMART SET CO., INC.
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"A Hint to Brides"

WHITE ELEPHANTS

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

LARRY, *a bad man*

FLO, *his co-worker*

ALBERT FENTON

IRENE, *his bride*

SCENE: *The living room of the Fentons' apartment, third floor front, Riverside Drive, New York City. At back are two outside windows, overlooking the Hudson. A door, left, down stage, leads to the bedroom; another door, right, up stage, leads to the dining room. It is a room rather too full of furniture, most of it very shiny and new. To the right of the library table, center, stands a tea cart loaded down with all sorts of small articles such as one might receive as wedding gifts.*

AT RISE: *The stage is dark, except for a dim glow of street lights through the windows. A clock, off-stage, is striking eight. There is the sound of a key being fitted into the hall door lock. After several attempts the door is cautiously opened. LARRY and FLO enter. LARRY plays an electric flash light about the room. He looks in at the doors on the opposite side of the stage. He finally crosses to windows and pulls down the blinds.*

LARRY (*whispering*)

All right, Flo, give us some light.

GARDEN VARIETIES

FLO (*tensely*)

Just a minute, Larry.

LARRY

Find the switch?

FLO (*groping along wall, left*)

It doesn't seem to be here.

LARRY

Feel around! It's right near the door. It must be! (*Crossing.*) What you scared of? Pull yourself together, Flo. (*Switches on light.*) If it had been a snake it woulda bit you!

(*LARRY is small and wiry, neatly dressed in a dark suit and cap; he looks more like a clerk than a burglar. FLO is about twenty-five and not unattractive in spite of her rather severely tailored coat-suit.*)

FLO

If you don't stop being so cross to me, Larry, I'll leave you to do this job alone!

LARRY

Aw, cut the bickering. I'm not your husband yet. (*Looking around.*) Say, this is what I call a *regular* layout! Pretty soft, I call it. . . .

FLO

Wouldn't it be wonderful, Larry, if *we* had a swell little apartment like this to move into when we get married?

LARRY

It sure would, kid.

FLO

These folks seem to have everything to make them happy.

WHITE ELEPHANTS

LARRY

Yeh, last month a strip-carpet wedding, with a honeymoon to Bermuda. . . . And when they come back their rich papas feather them a nest like this.

FLO

It does hardly seem fair they should have so much and we so little.

LARRY

It's things like this that makes me a practical socialist.

FLO

A what?

LARRY

Practical socialist . . . you know . . . help yourself to what you want.

FLO

It's all right as long as the cops don't get you.

LARRY

Fat chance of them getting us. We're playing this game so safe—it's positively monotonous!
(*Feigns a yawn.*)

FLO

Oughtn't we to start getting things together?

LARRY (*removing cap and sitting*)

What's the rush?

FLO

I'd just feel better if we hurried up, that's all

LARRY (*selecting cigar from humidor*)

We got all evening. Take it easy!

FLO

But they might come back. Maybe they won't like the show.

LARRY

Say, did you ever hear of anybody not liking "The Follies"? They'll stay till the show's over and then have to be *told* to go home! Those tickets set me back \$5.50 each. But my peace of mind's worth it.

FLO

Well, maybe you're right.

LARRY

Sure I am, Flo. I wouldn't of brought you along on this job if I didn't know it'd work out the way I had it framed.

FLO (*going to tea cart*)

Oh, look here, Larry. I'll bet these are some of their wedding presents! They've got so many they haven't any place to put them.

LARRY (*rising*)

They didn't do so worse, did they? Not a bad haul, I'll say!

FLO

How can we ever carry so many things?

LARRY

We'll just take the small, valuable stuff. (*Tapping a punch bowl disgustedly.*) They're giving newly-weds too many punch bowls these days.

FLO

Just look at this silver bonbon dish. Feel how heavy it is! And these silver salad forks. . . .

WHITE ELEPHANTS

LARRY (*deprecatingly*)

Yeh, Roger Brothers, 1847.

FLO

No. On the back it says "solid silver."

LARRY

You can't trust a wedding present. All isn't silver that glitters!

FLO

Oh, I see something here I want. This darling little vanity bag!

LARRY

All yours. And if you want something you don't see—ask for it. That's the kinda fella I am. Generous!

FLO (*admiring bag*)

There's something to say for being engaged to a burglar.

LARRY

Give us a kiss to prove it!

FLO

What did I tell you about mixing business and pleasure? (*Nevertheless, LARRY kisses FLO, and she doesn't seem to mind the mixture.*)

LARRY (*becoming businesslike*)

Now listen, Flo. You ease in the bedroom and see what you find loose. I'll give this room the once-over and then clean up the dining room.

FLO

When we get married we ought to have our pictures in the Sunday papers under the heading: "Husbands and wives who work together!"

GARDEN VARIETIES

(FLO goes out bedroom door. LARRY strolls leisurely about the room, picking up objects as if appraising them. He is thus engaged when a key is slipped into the hall door lock. LARRY whips out a revolver and puts on a mask. He hurries across room and switches off the light. The door opens and ALBERT FENTON enters. He is an anemic looking young man in horn-rimmed glasses, wearing a dinner jacket. Apparently he is in great haste. As he starts to cross to the table, he stumbles over LARRY, who is crouching behind a chair.)

ALBERT

My—my good Heavens!

LARRY (*covering him with gun*)

Put up your hands!

ALBERT (*obeying*)

You aren't going to sh-shoot me!

LARRY (*switching on light*)

Not if you do as I tell you. Keep those mitts up!
(*Pokes ALBERT in the ribs with gun.*) Higher!

ALBERT (*straining*)

That's as high as I can reach!

LARRY

Sit down!

ALBERT (*sitting*)

Wha-what are you going to do?

LARRY

All you got to do is keep still. Don't make a sound.

ALBERT

But, my dear man, I haven't time to be sitting here.
My wife's waiting for me!

LARRY

Can't help that. Now that you're here, you're in for the evening.

ALBERT

But I've left Irene at the subway. She'll wonder why I don't come back.

LARRY

She'll have to take it out in wondering.

ALBERT

Really, you're taking unfair advantage of me. . . .

LARRY

Why in hell *did* you come back?

ALBERT

You see, somebody sent Irene two tickets for "The Follies" to-night, and in the confusion of departure I left them there on the table. Forgot them completely.

LARRY

Why, you poor sap!

ALBERT (*apologetically*)

I know it was stupid of me. My wife said so, too.

LARRY

Don't think I'm going to give up this job because you're here. You're going to get robbed—just the same!

(*FLO enters, carrying lingerie, boxes, etc. Seeing ALBERT FENTON, she gives a scream and drops her packages.*)

LARRY

Say, can that! I've got one nut on my hands now!

GARDEN VARIETIES

FLO

Oh, Larry, I told you something would happen!

LARRY

Calm down! Nothing's happened.

FLO

Who is he?

ALBERT

I'm—I'm—

LARRY

Never mind, I'll do the talking. This, Flo, is Mr. Albert Fenton.

ALBERT

The husband!

LARRY (*nodding*)

Our host.

FLO

But we *saw* them leave for the show!

LARRY

We didn't take it into account that this bird was weak-minded. He forgot his tickets, and parked his wife down at the subway while he came back.

FLO

She'll be up here next!

LARRY

Let her come! The more the merrier.

FLO

What'll we do!

LARRY

We're going through with this job to-night, even if the Fentons hold a family reunion!

WHITE ELEPHANTS

ALBERT

I'm sorry to bother you, but I really must be allowed to lower my arms. They feel as if they would drop off.

LARRY

I guess we can oblige you now. Flo, see if he's got anything on his hip.

ALBERT

You mean to drink?

LARRY

No, no, a gun.

ALBERT

Me carry a weapon!

LARRY (*to FLO*)

Just frisk him to make sure. (*To ALBERT.*) Stand up when a lady wants to frisk you. Where're your manners?

ALBERT (*rising*)

I beg your pardon.

(*FLO feels ALBERT's pockets gingerly.*)

FLO

I don't feel anything.

LARRY

All right. Now, Flo, look around for something to tie him up with.

FLO (*searching*)

We want a piece of rope, don't we?

LARRY

What do you expect to find—a straitjacket? (*To ALBERT.*) Know of any rope around here?

ALBERT

There's some stout cord in the drawer of that writing desk, I think.

LARRY

Get it out, Flo.

ALBERT

There's really no need to tie me—I won't try to escape.

LARRY

That's what they all say. (FLO *hands cord to LARRY, which he tests.*) Ought to hold him. All right, you can let down your hands now. Put 'em behind your chair.

ALBERT

Like this?

LARRY

Tie it good and tight, Flo.

ALBERT (*fretfully*)

My wife will hate to miss the show to-night. She's been counting on it.

LARRY

You'll have enough show before to-night's over.

FLO

I hope this cord doesn't cut his wrists.

LARRY

Just be sure to get it tight.

FLO

Well, I don't want to hurt him.

ALBERT

It's quite all right. You're not hurting me.

WHITE ELEPHANTS

LARRY

Say, this is no pink tea!
(*Doorbell rings.*)

ALBERT

That must be Irene now!

LARRY

Turn off the light . . . she may have a key.
(*FLO obeys.*)

ALBERT

She's probably worried to death about me.

LARRY

Call out to her.

ALBERT

I want to beg you not to be rough with her. You see, it's the first time we've ever had burglars—

LARRY

I'll take care of that. Call to her!

ALBERT (*in honeymoon tones*)

Is that you, darling?

IRENE (*off*)

Albert, what are you *doing* all this time? We're awfully late!

LARRY

All right, Flo. Let her in.
(*FLO opens the hall door and IRENE enters.*)

IRENE

Why, Albert, what are you doing here in the dark?

ALBERT

Don't be frightened, precious!
(*LARRY turns on the light, and stands there pointing*

GARDEN VARIETIES

his revolver at IRENE. IRENE is a very pretty, cuddly young thing whose conversation carries with it a suggestion of baby-talk. She wears an opera cloak over a smart evening gown. As she sees the revolver and the strangers, she gives a piercing scream.)

ALBERT

It's all right, Angel!

LARRY

I don't want to hurt you, Mrs. Fenton, but you'll have to soft pedal that yelling.

IRENE

I can't keep from it!

(She screams again. LARRY points his revolver at her; she stops instantly.)

LARRY

You'll have to behave!

IRENE *(throwing her arms about her captive husband)*

Oh, Albert, what have they done to you!

ALBERT

Nothing, Angel, nothing!

IRENE

I know! They are burglars. . . . Come in the night to rob us. . . !

LARRY

Can the melodrama, will you!

ALBERT *(to LARRY)*

She'll be all right in a minute. It's just the shock. . . .

IRENE *(still clinging to her husband)*

I feel as though I were going to faint.

WHITE ELEPHANTS

ALBERT

Would you mind getting her a glass of cold water?
In the bathroom. . . .

LARRY (*signing*)

All right, Flo.

(FLO goes out dining room door.)

LARRY

You'll have to let us tie you up, Mrs. Fenton.

(IRENE gives a little moan.)

ALBERT (*as if addressing a child*)

You won't mind a bit, Angel, when you get used to it.

IRENE

I don't want to be tied!

ALBERT

You can sit right here beside me, and he'll tie you up, just like me. (To LARRY.) Won't you?

LARRY (*offering her a chair*)

Try this. I'll make you as easy as I can.

IRENE (*sitting*)

Thank you.

LARRY

Better take off your cloak first. You'll get too warm.

IRENE (*hastily*)

Oh, no. I'm very comfortable.

LARRY (*taking hold of cloak*)

You'll be better with it off.

(Reluctantly IRENE allows him to take her opera cloak from her shoulders. He ties her hands behind her chair.)

GARDEN VARIETIES

ALBERT

Is he hurting you, darling?

IRENE

No, not yet.

LARRY (*seeing a handsome rope of pearls about IRENE'S neck*)

Oh, so *that's* why you didn't want to take off your cape. No wonder!

(FLO *returns with a glass of water*)

FLO

This is as cold as I could get it.

LARRY

Give her a sip. It'll brace her up.

(IRENE *barely wets her lips and immediately shows signs of improvement.*)

ALBERT

All right now, Angel?

IRENE

Yes, dearest, thank you.

LARRY (*clearing his throat embarrassedly*)

Well, Flo, I guess we can start collecting.

FLO

You mean we're going through with this job?

LARRY

Sure! Why not?

FLO

But they came back!

LARRY

That's not our fault.

WHITE ELEPHANTS

FLO

Oh, but it's different now! I'm no saint, Larry, but I haven't got the heart to steal before their very eyes!

LARRY

If they don't like it they can close their eyes.

FLO

I can't, Larry—I can't do it!

LARRY

Say, I've had about all I can stand to-night without you acting up, too!

FLO

But I didn't know things would turn out like this!

LARRY

You're making a monkey out of us before these folks! Now you do as I say. Go over and get those pearls from around Mrs. Fenton's neck!

ALBERT

But you wouldn't take *them*! They're a wedding gift from her father!

IRENE

And cost a great deal!

LARRY

You two keep out of this! Go on, Flo, get me those pearls!

FLO

I can't do it, Larry.

LARRY (*desperately*)

Ain't that just like a woman. . . !

(FLO *bursts into tears and falls sobbing upon the divan.*)

GARDEN VARIETIES

IRENE (*indignantly*)

You're a brute to make her cry like that!

LARRY

What can I do with her!

IRENE

You didn't have to talk to her as if she were a dog!
Shame on you!

(IRENE begins to cry, too. Both women make considerable noise with their duet. LARRY finally goes to FLO, lifts her to her feet.)

LARRY

That's all right, Flo. . . . Not so loud!

ALBERT

Don't cry, Irene, angel. . . !

LARRY (*wiping FLO's eyes with his handkerchief*)

Never mind—forget it. You don't have to take the pearls.

(Both men strive to comfort their ladies.)

FLO

Oh, I'm so miserable. . . !

LARRY

All I know is, we went to a lot of trouble and expense to frame this job, and now you turn chicken-hearted and want to leave empty handed. It's nothing short of *criminal*!

FLO (*sniffing*)

Larry, I know I'm acting like a fool, but I just *can't* steal their wedding presents since I've seen how things are. This couple have just set up housekeeping, and are starting out in life. It's too near our own wedding—maybe that's why I feel this way.

WHITE ELEPHANTS

LARRY

What's our wedding got to do with it?

FLO (*after a pause*)

All I know is, I can't marry you, Larry, if you rob them.

LARRY (*dejectedly*)

Well, Flo, you got me. . . . I don't know what to do about it.

FLO

There's nothing to do but leave.

LARRY (*turning*)

I guess you're right. We might as well wash up and go home. . . .

(IRENE and ALBERT have been listening open-mouthed to this discussion. IRENE's face lights up and she begins to fidget.)

IRENE

May I speak a moment? I've just had an idea.

ALBERT (*nervously*)

I wouldn't say anything if I were you, darling.

LARRY (*to IRENE*)

You've said enough to last you a month.

FLO

Let her talk, Larry, if she wants to.

(LARRY merely shrugs his shoulders.)

IRENE (*to LARRY*)

I think I've got a wonderful scheme. It'll settle your troubles and some of ours as well.

LARRY

We're listening.

GARDEN VARIETIES

IRENE

Albert, why couldn't we let them take some of our wedding presents?

ALBERT

Why, sweetheart!

IRENE

Oh, just a few!

LARRY (*sarcastically*)

You mean—take enough to pay us for our time. . . .

IRENE (*naïvely*)

You see, Albert and I have oodles of friends and relatives, poor dears; so we just got *stacks* of gifts that we've no use for whatever.

LARRY

White elephants, you might say.

IRENE

That's just what you called them, Albert—white elephants. (*To LARRY.*) It would really be doing us a favor if you'd steal some from us.

LARRY

Well, that *is* an idea, now. . . .

IRENE (*babbling on*)

We'd already thought some of selling the things we didn't want. But we were afraid of being found out, and we wouldn't hurt any one's feelings for worlds, would we, Albert?

ALBERT (*weakly*)

No, Angel. . . .

IRENE (*to FLO*)

You wouldn't mind stealing some of our things if we gave you permission, would you?

WHITE ELEPHANTS

FLO (*sweetly*)

Of course not, Mrs. Fenton.

LARRY

What do you think we ought to start in to take?

IRENE

Let me see. . . . There's so much I hardly know what to tell you.

ALBERT

I'm sure I wouldn't mind if a few of those cut-glass nut bowls were to disappear.

LARRY

Anything you say.

IRENE

Well, over there on the tea cart you'll find three silver water bottles. Leave us the one that's engraved with our initials, and you may have the others. They came from Tiffany's.

(FLO and LARRY go to fetch the water bottles.)

ALBERT (*aside*)

Really, dearest, do you think this a wise plan?

IRENE

Please don't interrupt, Albert. (*To LARRY.*) In those four long boxes you'll find solid silver cheese knives—

LARRY

Do swell people eat cheese with a knife? Honest?

IRENE (*rapidly*)

And there are a dozen berry spoons, six candlesticks, two gold fruit dishes, eight pickle forks, three electric toasters, seven cocktail shakers—

GARDEN VARIETIES

LARRY (*at tea cart*)

Wait a minute, wait a minute! You're going too fast!

FLO

. . . eight pickle forks, three electric toasters. . . .

IRENE (*to ALBERT*)

Isn't it just splendid I thought of this, darling?

ALBERT

It doesn't seem quite right, Angel, but then—

LARRY (*rubbing his hands together like a clerk*)

Now is there anything else, Mrs. Fenton?

IRENE (*thinking hard*)

Would you be interested in a stuffed owl?

LARRY

A stuffed what?

IRENE (*indicating owl in corner*)

Owl! Over there. It was a present from Albert's Uncle Hubert out in Nebraska. He's a taxi—taxi—what do you call them?

LARRY

Taxi driver?

IRENE

No! You know! What is your Uncle Hubert, Albert?

ALBERT

A taxidermist.

IRENE

You know. He stuffs things. He says the owl is a very fine specimen.

WHITE ELEPHANTS

LARRY (*inspecting the owl*)

If it's all the same to you, we'll pass up the bird.

FLO

Why, of course we'll take it. Larry!

LARRY (*disgustedly*)

How are we going to carry an owl?

IRENE (*brightly*)

You can wrap it up.

LARRY

Well, I suppose we've all got to take the blanks along with the prizes in this wedding present graft.

IRENE

What about some hand painted china? We've no end of that stored there under the divan.

LARRY

I don't like to disappoint you, but I guess not.

IRENE

It's very expensive.

LARRY

I know. And I appreciate your offering it to us, but you see it's sort of out of date. No market for it.

ALBERT (*aside to Irene*)

It seems to me he's getting frightfully particular.

IRENE

You know yourself, Albert, it's old-fashioned and hideous. I don't blame him a bit.

LARRY

You haven't got a couple of old suit cases or something we could carry this stuff in, have you?

GARDEN VARIETIES

IRENE

Why, there is one in our dining room—brand new.

LARRY (*gallantly*)

Maybe you'd rather I wouldn't prow! around your flat alone. I'll let you loose, so's you can find it for me.

(*He unties IRENE.*)

IRENE

That's very considerate of you. You can come with me. We'll see what all we can find. (*Rising.*) We've any number of flat pieces of Sheffield that are duplicates in here, too, that I wish you'd see if you care to have. (*They are crossing to dining room door; IRENE is quite affable.*) Also, a handsome chafing dish, an enamel mantel clock and a radio set—

(*They exeunt dining room door.*)

ALBERT (*nettled*)

It looks to me as if you were going to have to order a moving van.

FLO (*arranging presents*)

Oh, we can manage all right. Larry's stronger than he looks.

ALBERT

How long have you been—doing this sort of thing?

FLO

You mean, taking things. . . ?

ALBERT

You aren't exactly my idea of a burglar.

FLO (*coming over to him*)

Well, I'll tell you something if you won't tell. . . .

This is the first time I've ever helped Larry.

ALBERT

Really!

FLO

And it's going to be the last! Larry's promised me he'll never break in another house after to-night.

ALBERT

I'm glad he's going to reform.

FLO

As soon as we're married Larry's going to turn honest and be a bootlegger.

(Laughter heard from dining room.)

ALBERT *(jealously)*

They seem to be getting on together famously.

FLO

Larry's just jollying her up a bit. It's his way.

ALBERT

I don't know if it's just right—my wife with a strange man that way. . . .

FLO

Don't worry. Larry never mixes business and pleasure. Except with me.

(IRENE and LARRY return chatting. He carries a suit case; she carries boxes, etc.)

IRENE *(smiling up at LARRY)*

You're certainly a clever person!

LARRY

Now you're kidding me! You got a hot line, I'll say!

IRENE

Albert, I just asked Mr. Larry how he liked being a

burglar, and just like that he said, "Oh, it's all right, but it keeps me up nights!"

(No one laughs but IRENE.)

FLO

Larry's always pulling that old one.

(LARRY is busily packing the last of the wedding presents in the suit case.)

LARRY

Is there anything else you want to get rid of, Mrs. Fenton?

IRENE *(to ALBERT)*

Can you think of anything else, darling?

ALBERT

What about those wax flowers your Cousin Walter sent us?

LARRY *(strapping suit case)*

I'd like to oblige you, but nix on the wax flowers. Give 'em to the janitor.

IRENE *(sitting)*

You'll have to tie me up again before you go, Mr. Larry.

LARRY

You must like it.

IRENE

It's so much more thrilling this way.

LARRY

Well, it's all the same to me. You fix her up, Flo.
(FLO takes cord and again ties IRENE to her chair.)

IRENE

And, Mr. Larry, will you do me one more little favor? When you get to a drugstore call up police headquarters and tell them there's been a robbery.

LARRY

I don't get you.

IRENE

I want the police to break in and rescue us. Like the movies!

LARRY

So's you'll get your names in the paper?

IRENE

Well—partly that.

LARRY (*admiringly*)

You're a slick one!

IRENE

You'll do it for me, won't you?

LARRY

You've been so good to us, I don't like to refuse you anything.

IRENE (*enthusiastically*)

It's just like in a play, isn't it, Albert?

ALBERT

I suppose so, sweetheart. . . .

LARRY

Well, Flo, we might as well be moving along.

FLO (*picking up bundles*)

I'm ready.

ALBERT

Before you go, would you mind telling me just how you knew my wife and I were going to "The Follies" to-night? I'm just curious to know.

LARRY

You tell him, Flo. I haven't got the heart!

GARDEN VARIETIES

FLO

Larry sent you those tickets.

IRENE

What!

ALBERT

You don't mean it! Irene, you said a friend sent them.

LARRY

That's what I told her over the phone.

IRENE

And that was the way you got us out of the house?
How ingenious!

LARRY

Always be suspicious of anything you get for nothing.

IRENE

Well, I'm not sorry things turned out as they did.

FLO (*to IRENE*)

Good-by. I'll never forget what you did for me.

IRENE

I'll not forget you, either, dear. All my life I've had the wrong impression about burglars. After all, you're just folks—like us.

LARRY

Sure! Only we don't have rich papas to help us along.

ALBERT

You won't forget to phone the police to release us, will you, old man?

FLO (*at door*)

I won't let him forget.

LARRY

Well, so long and good luck! Here's wishing you a long and happy married life!

IRENE

Same to you. And thank you again, for this evening.

LARRY (*politely*)

Oh, don't mention it.

ALBERT (*laughing hysterically*)

He doesn't want it mentioned!

IRENE

Wait—wait a minute! You're forgetting Uncle Hubert's owl!

LARRY (*resignedly*)

Get it, Flo.

(FLO crosses to bookcase, takes up huge stuffed owl. Hurries to catch up with LARRY, who has already gone out. The door shuts behind the burglars. The captive newlyweds sit helplessly looking at each other for a moment.)

IRENE

Oh, wasn't it perfectly thrilling, darling!

ALBERT (*without enthusiasm*)

I suppose so, Angel.

IRENE

I don't know when I've met a more fascinating man!

ALBERT

She was a pleasing person, too. Her ethics are a trifle muddled, but a pleasing person.

IRENE (*after a slight pause*)

Aren't you proud of your Irene, darling, to think of

GARDEN VARIETIES

such a beautiful plan to get rid of all those useless wedding gifts?

ALBERT

I may be dense, Angel, but I don't see why you were so anxious for them to take our things. They must have a thousand dollars' worth.

IRENE

I hope it's two thousand dollars' worth!

ALBERT

I don't understand you, dearest. . . .

IRENE

Silly boy! Have you forgotten all about that burglar insurance which I had you take out for us yesterday? Enough to cover *all* our wedding presents.

ALBERT (*aghast*)

Oh, my Heavens!

IRENE

So you see—the insurance company will have to pay us back full value for everything they took. (*Giggling.*) Even for Uncle Hubert's stuffed owl!

ALBERT

But—but—but—

IRENE

Why, what's the matter, Albert? Are you ill?

ALBERT

I—I forgot to send in the insurance policy!

IRENE

You—you forgot! . . . Why—why, then, we've been *robbed!* Robbed! Help! Police! Police!

(*IRENE continues to scream at the top of her voice.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE BUG MAN

(Initial Performance)

By the Beechwood Players, Beechwood Playhouse,
Scarborough-on-the-Hudson

With the following cast:

JUDY *Mrs. Van Tassel*

ROSCOE TINKHAM *Mr. Seely*

MRS. MALLOUGHBY-WELLS *Mrs. Clarkson*

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THE BUG MAN

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

MRS. MALLOWHBY-WELLS, *the matron*

JUDY, *the maid*

ROSCOE TINKHAM, *the huntsman*

SCENE: *Mrs. Malloughby-Wells' kitchen*

TIME: *About a year after the Armistice*

It is a model kitchen, this cookery of MRS. WELLS' Park Avenue apartment. Its shining walls and spotless floor remind one of the efficacy of Gold Dust. The nickel upon the gas range glistens like a new pair of patent leathers. Along the rear wall is a white enameled sink, and beneath the draining board stands a fat laundry tub. A refrigerator along the right wall. On the opposite side of the room an elaborate kitchen cabinet. There are two doors. One is the tradesmen's entrance, up stage right; the other, down stage left, is a swinging door leading into the pantry and other parts of the house.

It must be still quite early in the afternoon, for as the curtain rises JUDY is discovered finishing the luncheon dishes. She is a treasure of a servant—MRS. WELLS would tell you so. Very pretty, with frizzly reddish-colored hair and a complexion like a talcum powder advertisement. She wears an apron. As she works she sings a snatch of a popular song. Suddenly she looks around, her eye intent upon some-

thing which seems to be crawling along the floor toward the refrigerator. JUDY jumps forward and steps viciously upon whatever it is. It must be a bug.

JUDY (*speaking to the grease spot on the floor*)

There, I guess that'll hold you for a while! (*She goes back to her dishes, looking back over her shoulder at the grease spot again.*) And that isn't the last of you that are going to get it before the afternoon's over either!

(*The whistle in the speaking tube, which hangs upon the wall near the pantry door, makes a shrill piping. JUDY goes to the contrivance, wiping her hands on her apron.*)

JUDY

Yes'm? No'm, he's not come yet. . . . Only one more—just now. The nasty thing was making for the ice box, and I squashed the daylight^s out of him! . . . Yes'm, I'll let you know when he gets here.

(*JUDY returns to her work. Pretty soon the tradesmen's doorbell rings. JUDY goes to answer it. ROSCOE TINKHAM enters. He is a pleasantly homely young man, wearing an old army issue overcoat, which he removes soon after his entrance. He carries a professional looking little black satchel. At first sight the two stop still in amazement. It is plain that this is the last place they had expected to meet.*)

JUDY

Mister Tinkham!

ROSCOE

Hello, Judy.

JUDY

Why, what are you doing here?

ROSCOE (*sheepishly*)

Didn't expect to see me, did you?

JUDY

You're the *last* person I expected to see!

ROSCOE

You handed me a surprise, too, I'll say!

JUDY

How'd you know where I worked?

ROSCOE

I didn't.

JUDY

Why'd you come then?

ROSCOE

Well—you see, I didn't come to see you exactly.

JUDY

145257

I can't make you out, Roscoe.

ROSCOE

Is—don't Mrs. Malloughby-Wells live here?

JUDY

Yes—but . . .

ROSCOE (*setting satchel on table*)

Well, it's all right then.

JUDY (*suspiciously*)

What's all right?

ROSCOE

I can start to work.

JUDY (*horrified*)

You're not—you can't be the—the bug man!

ROSCOE (*with dignity*)

I'm the vermin exterminator, if that's what you mean.

JUDY

You lied to me then, did you?

ROSCOE

Well, for a little while—yes.

JUDY (*wrathfully*)

And you've been kidding me along all the time—saying you were an insurance agent!

ROSCOE

I meant to tell you the truth, honest I did.

JUDY

And I've been keeping company with a bug man, and didn't know it!

ROSCOE

Aw, listen, Judy. I'm sorry I wasn't game enough to tell you the truth at the start. But when we sat out that dance that first night over at the Gardens and you asked me what my business was, I didn't have the nerve to tell you. I was scared you wouldn't let me see you any more.

JUDY

Well, you had good reason to be scared!

ROSCOE

Other girls had given me the air when I told them what I worked at, and I wasn't going to take a chance losing you. I liked you too well—right from the start. You believe that, don't you, Judy?

JUDY

Well, I can't forgive your lying to me like that.

THE BUG MAN

You, an insurance agent! And me, fool that I was, believing you!

ROSCOE

You're so pretty and all, you can't really blame me. Besides, I had it all planned out to tell you the truth when I saw you at the Gardens to-night.

JUDY

There's not going to be any "to-night at the Gardens," as far as I'm concerned.

ROSCOE (*alarmed*)

You mean to say—you won't go to the dance with me to-night?

JUDY (*coldly*)

Why, really, considering these new revelations I don't see how I could.

ROSCOE

Standing me up, are you?

JUDY

Mrs. Malloughby-Wells wouldn't listen to my going out with a bug man.

ROSCOE

What do you think—I carry the bugs around with me!

JUDY

I certainly hope not!

ROSCOE

You girls are all the same. Pride! You let the idea of bugs come between you and a good time. When I'm through with my job I wash up and forget it.

GARDEN VARIETIES

JUDY

It's just the thought of it! It makes me feel all crawly.

ROSCOE

Shucks! You don't know what that word means till you've been in the army and had cooties.

JUDY

Well, you don't need to explain, you give me enough of an idea!

ROSCOE (*looking around*)

Is this where you've been having the trouble? (*Sees the bug that JUDY stepped on and kicks it with his foot.*) Yes, I see. This is the place.
(*He unlatches his satchel.*)

JUDY

Oh, I promised to let her know as soon as you came.
(*She goes to the speaking tube, blowing into it; she waits for an answer.*)

ROSCOE

What all kind of vermin have you got?

JUDY

I haven't got any kind! The kitchen's got cockroaches.

ROSCOE

Well, it won't have 'em long.
(*He takes several cans from his satchel. Then a large wad of putty, which he starts in to knead.*)

JUDY (*into speaking tube*)

Hello, ma'am. . . . The bug man's here. (*She shoots a malicious glance at ROSCOE.*) Yes'm. . . .
(*She releases the tube.*)

ROSCOE

What sort of a dame is she?

JUDY

Why, she has too much company, but is generally the most refined lady I've ever met up with.

ROSCOE

Widow?

JUDY

Twice a widow. And more money than you could shake a stick at, and no one to spend it on.

ROSCOE

Don't she travel or anything?

JUDY

Travel! She used to *never* stay at home before she got her rheumatism.

ROSCOE

I sure do like people that have traveled a lot. It broadens them out so much.

(There is a short silence. ROSCOE begins to stick the putty around the cracks in the doors, a process known as "sealing the room." The room must be air-tight before the fumigation can take place.)

JUDY (*engrossed*)

What do you keep in those cans?

ROSCOE (*waxing professional*)

In treating the roach we have a new patented fumigating process called "Double A 1," that we guarantee will do the work. It will not only get the roach, but will also kill any other household pest such as mice, rats and Croton bugs as well.

JUDY

Isn't it dangerous to have about?

ROSCOE

Well, I should say it is! Why, last year here in Manhattan alone forty people were dead from it. Breathing the deadly fumes!

JUDY

Oh, I don't think she'd want you to use it here!

ROSCOE

No need to worry when it's in the hands of an expert. I've been operating with it now for almost a year, and never even lost a house cat. (*Taking a large red can out of his bag.*) This stuff makes 'em curl up their toes!

JUDY (*looking anxiously about her beautiful kitchen*)

I suppose it will muss everything up.

ROSCOE

Not a bit. When I'm all set, I light this can. Then, up comes a cloud of yellow smoke. I run out, slam the door shut. And after four hours I put on my gas mask, come back, and put up the windows. In about ten minutes it'll be aired out enough for you to be getting supper.

JUDY

And we'll be free of them?

ROSCOE

For good and all. We guarantee. . . . (*Changing his tone.*) Say, Judy, you didn't mean that a while ago when you said you wouldn't go to the dance at the Gardens with me to-night, did you?

JUDY

That's the way I still feel about it.

THE BUG MAN

ROSCOE

On the level?

JUDY

We can't keep company any more, Mr. Tinkham.

ROSCOE

Vermin exterminating is as honest as any profession there is!

JUDY

So's being a garbage man honest. But I don't want to go with one of them.

ROSCOE (*pained at the comparison*)

All right, have it your own way! But let me tell you this—you or no one else can make me think my job isn't as good as anybody's. I'm doing good, ridding people of their vermin. (*As a brilliant afterthought.*) Didn't Saint Patrick rid Ireland of snakes, and look, they've named a church after him!

JUDY

But that was years ago. Besides, snakes aren't roaches. Roach exterminating isn't refined, and you know it!

ROSCOE

Rats! Just listen. (*Thumbs pages of his notebook.*) Here are a few clients of mine, and millionaires to boot. The J. R. Hamiltons, the Livermores, Judge Holman, Sargent Lane, T. J. Hartzberg, of Hartzberg and Reiman . . .

JUDY

I don't see where those names make any difference between us.

ROSCOE (*hotly*)

All right, go ahead like the rest. Play around with

your white-collar sheiks, and see where they get you! I'll match my bank book with theirs any time.

JUDY

I'll pick my gentlemen friends where I choose, without any help from you or any one else!

(MRS. MALLOWHBY-WELLS *sweeps through the swinging doors from the pantry. She is a plump patrician of about fifty—white hair and a distinguished manner. She wears a fluffly pink and lace negligée.*)

MRS. WELLS

Have you captured any of the horrid little beasts yet, young man?

ROSCOE (*professional again*)

Madame, just now I am preparing the room. When I light these cans the fumigation will do the rest.

MRS. WELLS

Oh, I'm so annoyed by all this—trouble. (*Pointing to cans.*) Those things are perfectly safe, aren't they?

JUDY

He says it isn't a bit dangerous in his hands.

ROSCOE (*complacently*)

She is right. You need have no fear, Madame.

MRS. WELLS

But how does it act?

ROSCOE

The poisonous fumes seep in the holes where the roaches are. When it hits them, they run out in the open and fall dead in their tracks.

MRS. WELLS (*impressed*)

You don't tell me!

THE BUG MAN

ROSCOE

I do. And then all you have to do is sweep them up on a dustpan.

JUDY

Ugh!

MRS. WELLS (*shuddering*)

Who would ever have dreamed *my* kitchen should have vermin! I'm mortified to death.

ROSCOE (*working as he talks*)

Why, Madame, it's no disgrace to have bugs in a big city like New York. When you have people living on top of you, underneath you, and on both sides of you, what else can you expect?

JUDY

You'd be surprised, ma'am, if he showed you the list of folks he's done for.

MRS. WELLS

But it's so humiliating. . . !

ROSCOE

You ladies are always trying to hide it that you have vermin. When it's nothing you can help at all.

MRS. WELLS

I've always been so careful to keep my kitchen clean, too.

JUDY

I'll say you have!

ROSCOE

I'll tell you something funny along that line. I got a call from one apartment along here on Park Avenue not two weeks ago where a lady was having a tea. The maid didn't know any better and she took

GARDEN VARIETIES

me right in where the company was. The lady of the house turned all colors of the rainbow when I told her what I'd come for. She hummed and hawed around and finally said I was in the wrong place.

MRS. WELLS

Naturally she didn't want her guests to think that—

ROSCOE

Oh, I guess the other ladies could've stood the shock. Do you know what? While I was standing there I recognized four of the ladies as regular customers of mine.

MRS. WELLS

How revolting! Who were they?

ROSCOE

Sorry, Madame, but we make it a rule never to give away our customers. Why, if I wanted, I could tell you the name of a very prominent movie actress in Greenwich Village who had fleas.

MRS. WELLS

Mercy!

ROSCOE

She wore herself to a thread worrying about it, till she called me in on the job. After one fumigation with "Double A 1"—that stuff in the red can—she never had another flea.

JUDY

How did she ever get them?

ROSCOE

We traced them to her Pekingese pup.

THE BUG MAN

MRS. WELLS (*with an air of confession*)

I was afflicted—er—in that way once myself. It was shortly after Mr. Malloughby's death—my first husband, you know—and I had gone down to Nice to recuperate. I was stopping at the Angleterre. To my utter horror, I found the place literally alive with sand fleas! I shall never forget it . . . never! (MRS. WELLS fans herself with as much as she can spare of her negligée.)

ROSCOE (*seeing his chance*)

Yes, I guess that little drawback goes with the Riviera. France! Now there's a buggy country for you!

MRS. WELLS

Italy is just as bad, or worse.

ROSCOE

I remember how bit up I was by fleas from laying on the beach near the Casino at Nice one afternoon. (*This talk of bugs seems to have set JUDY'S back to itching. She surreptitiously scratches herself. Nevertheless, the discussion absorbs her.*)

MRS. WELLS (*warming*)

Ah, then you know Southern France, Mr.—Mr.—

ROSCOE

Tinkham, Madame. Roscoe Tinkham. Yes, I must say I have played about some on the Riviera.

MRS. WELLS

Say what you please, there is no place as heavenly as the Côte d'Azur.

ROSCOE (*sincerely*)

It's the nearest to heaven I've ever been.

GARDEN VARIETIES

MRS. WELLS

It's an enchanted land. Its perpetual sunshine, the lovely mountains, the rose-clad villas, the blue Mediterranean—

ROSCOE (*continuing quite in key*)

Yes, and the promenades, the cafés, the gambling halls, the beautiful women. . . .

(*JUDY is astounded at such eloquence from her bug man.*)

MRS. WELLS

Beautiful Nice! What wouldn't I give to be there now—sitting on my little balcony overlooking the sea at the Negresco.

ROSCOE

The Negresco? That's some hotel!

MRS. WELLS

You know the Negresco?

ROSCOE

Know it! I stayed there!

MRS. WELLS

You stayed there! I don't understand. . . .

ROSCOE

For two whole weeks.

MRS. WELLS

When Mr. Malloughby was alive we used to have the same suite at the Negresco every winter.

ROSCOE

Happen to remember Pierre down there?

MRS. WELLS

Pierre . . . Pierre. . . . ?

THE BUG MAN

ROSCOE

He sort of ran the place, as I remember.

MRS. WELLS

Oh, you mean Pierre, the *maitre d'hôtel*! That jolly little Frenchman with cheeks like two red apples. And so polite. . . .

ROSCOE (*delighted*)

That's him! Pierre's a pal of mine. Met him at the front.

MRS. WELLS

Oh, so you were in the army?

ROSCOE

Sure. That's the way I got down to Nice. I put in for fourteen days' leave and the captain gave it to me.

MRS. WELLS

Fancy that!

ROSCOE

I got no kick coming from Uncle Sam. That one trip south was worth fighting the Germans for.

MRS. WELLS

Of course it was. What time of the year were you there?

ROSCOE

Along in January.

MRS. WELLS

Just at the height of the season. Mr.—ah—Tinkham, shall you ever forget the gorgeous sunsets looking down the *plage* across the Baie des Anges from Beausoleil? . . . *Quel tableau exquise*. . . !

GARDEN VARIETIES

ROSCOE (*translating her French*)

It sure was an exquisite picture!

(*They both seem quite carried away by their memories. Cockroaches are now indeed far away.*)

MRS. WELLS

And the ride out to Saint Pierre de Feric . . .

JUDY (*completely mystified*)

The ride out to what?

ROSCOE (*witheringly*)

Oh, you wouldn't understand.

MRS. WELLS

Mr. Tinkham, I must tell you of a most delightful experience I had on my last trip to the Côte d'Azur—I know you'll appreciate it. One day we took a *fiacre* and started off to Monte Carlo—

ROSCOE

Monte Carlo! Nothing wrong with that place. . . !

MRS. WELLS (*nodding her approval*)

As we were ascending the rather steep incline just beyond Cap Ferrat, one of the wheels of our vehicle came off. It was almost at the gate of President Poincaré's villa. He, with the true courtesy of the Frenchman, sent a servant to invite us in for a glass of wine, until repairs could be made.

ROSCOE

Well, what do you know—I had a glass of wine there, too!

MRS. WELLS

At Poincaré's villa!

ROSCOE

I happened to be in Nice when General Pershing arrived. A bunch of us doughboys there on leave

THE BUG MAN

were detailed to go along with him to Poincaré's, so's he could put on more dog.

MRS. WELLS

I see, as his bodyguard. Just imagine your being at Poincaré's, too!

ROSCOE

Seems to me we got a lot in common, Mrs. Wells. Our travels and all, I mean.

MRS. WELLS

Who would have thought I should find such an interesting young man right here in my own kitchen.

ROSCOE (*with a significant glance at JUDY*)

And the bug man, at that!

MRS. WELLS

Did you, Mr. Tinkham, by any chance, visit the village of La Turbie? It's one of the beauty spots along the Riviera.

ROSCOE

La Turbie. Let's see . . . that's the town stuck up there on the mountains above Mentone?

MRS. WELLS

Isn't it marvelous there? Such air!

ROSCOE

I'll tell the world!

MRS. WELLS (*with half-closed eyes*)

There it lies nestled on the crest of the *Alpes-Maritimes*, along the great Corniche Road. In *les faubourgs*, you will recall, are the ruins of an Augustan Temple standing on the Aurelian Way.

ROSCOE

I must of missed that, but I'll tell you what I do remember seeing from way up there. Corsica!

GARDEN VARIETIES

MRS. WELLS

Corsica?

ROSCOE

Sure. The Island of Corsica—where Napoleon came from.

MRS. WELLS

Oh, you must be mistaken. It couldn't have been Corsica you saw. Impossible.

ROSCOE

Begging your pardon—and you ought to know, Mrs. Wells—but I sure saw Corsica that day from up there. One of those Y.M.C.A. birds pointed it out to me.

MRS. WELLS

Why, my dear young man, you *couldn't* have—possibly! Corsica is miles and miles out in the Mediterranean. I've gone there by steamer.

ROSCOE (*stubbornly*)

Well, I saw Corsica. And I hadn't been drinking any van rouge either!

MRS. WELLS (*slightly irritated*)

There's no use to argue, Mr. Tinkham. Corsica from La Turbie! It's preposterous!

ROSCOE

Well, I'm going to look it up when I get back to the shop.

MRS. WELLS

Just to satisfy you, I'll look it up right here. I know I'm right.

ROSCOE

I don't want to be pig-headed about this thing. . . .

THE BUG MAN

MRS. WELLS

It's no trouble at all. I've my Baedeker of Southern France in the library.

ROSCOE

I wish you would then.

MRS. WELLS

But I *know* I'm right. Why, to see Corsica from La Turbie—would take the eye of a Cyclops!

(MRS. WELLS *bustles out via the pantry door*. JUDY *has been out of the picture for some time*. She feels as if she has been attending a Burton Holmes. ROSCOE *once more sets about his task of exterminating*.)

JUDY (*alarmed*)

Now you've done it! What's that she said about cycle-cops?

ROSCOE

No matter what she said, I'm not going to let her talk me down. I know what I saw. You *can* see Corsica from La Turbie!

JUDY

But you ought to agree with her.

ROSCOE

Why? I'd like to know.

JUDY

It's the only way to get along with folks you work for.

ROSCOE

I wish I'd bet her she was wrong. You women are always so darn sure you're right about everything. (*Although agitated, he continues putting the cracks.*)

GARDEN VARIETIES

JUDY

I've worked for her nearly a year. She's never been wrong yet.

ROSCOE (*reverting to doughboy tactics*)

What'll you bet she's not wrong this time?

JUDY

I don't bet.

ROSCOE

Just this once—what'll you bet me?

JUDY

What'll you bet *me*?

ROSCOE (*craftily*)

I'll bet you that date you had with me to dance at the Gardens to-night.

JUDY

Oh, that's all off, anyway.

ROSCOE

You still think you'd be lowering yourself to go out with me?

JUDY

Well, maybe I would and maybe I wouldn't.

ROSCOE

Mrs. Wells thinks pretty well of me, I notice. Hear what she called me—"an interesting young man"?

JUDY

Why don't you ask to take *her* to the dance then?

ROSCOE

Come on, be a sport. Bet me.

JUDY (*after a moment*)

All right. I'll bet you.

THE BUG MAN

ROSCOE

No backing out.

JUDY

I'm not a quitter.

ROSCOE

If I'm right about that Corsica business you'll go to the Gardens with me to-night?

JUDY

Yes.

ROSCOE

Shake on it!

(They solemnly perform the ritual denoting good faith.)

JUDY

I feel pretty safe about not losing this bet.

ROSCOE

We'll see. When I know a thing—I know it!

(The whistle in the speaking tube blows fretfully.)

JUDY

That must be her now!

ROSCOE

Shall I talk to her?

JUDY

You might try to kid me. . . . You're not scared of what she'll say?

ROSCOE

Ask her.

JUDY *(taking up speaking tube)*

Yes'm. . . . Yes'm, Mrs. Wells. . . . Yes'm. . . .

Yes'm. . . .

GARDEN VARIETIES

ROSCOE

Stop yessin'! Ask her.

JUDY (*to ROSCOE*)

Hush! She's reading it out of the guidebook.

ROSCOE (*anxiously*)

What's she saying?

JUDY (*into the tube again*)

Yes'm. . . . Yes'm. . . . Yes'm. . . .

ROSCOE (*disgustedly*)

Good gosh!

JUDY (*to MRS. WELLS*)

Yes'm. . . . I'll tell him.

(*She drops the speaking tube.*)

ROSCOE

Well, what's the verdict?

JUDY (*meekly*)

The guidebook says on a clear day you can see Corsica from La Turbie, or whatever it is.

ROSCOE

Sure. Didn't I tell you I was right? Not so bad, am I?

JUDY

She asked me to beg your pardon, too.

ROSCOE (*complacently*)

Any lady would do the same.

JUDY (*not much depressed*)

I lost my bet, didn't I?

ROSCOE

You bet you did!

THE BUG MAN

JUDY (*coquettishly*)

Well, I'm a good loser. Especially since you're such a good dancer, Roscoe.

ROSCOE (*blushing a trifle*)

You're not such a slob as a dancer yourself, Judy. . . .

JUDY

I couldn't dance except with a good leader. . . .

ROSCOE (*standing quite close to her*)

Give us a kiss. . . .

(ROSCOE *doesn't wait for JUDY to give her consent; he grabs her impetuously and kisses her. He kisses her several times, in fact.*)

JUDY (*breathless*)

We oughtn't to be doing this—now. What about the bugs?

ROSCOE (*releasing her*)

What do you know! I forgot all about them!

JUDY

Better get on with your work.

ROSCOE

I'm all ready now but lighting up. You go over to the door and wait for me.

(*He points to the pantry door. ROSCOE places the large red can with the fuse in the middle of the floor, and stooping over he starts to light it. Suddenly he stops and begins to laugh.*)

JUDY

What's so funny?

ROSCOE

Oh, I was just thinking. . . .

GARDEN VARIETIES

JUDY

What?

ROSCOE

I was just thinking that traveling does great things for a fella.

(By this time a thick yellow smoke is rising from the can. ROSCOE holds his nose and, beckoning JUDY to precede him, he goes out of kitchen. Gradually the deadly fumes begin to permeate the lairs of the unsuspecting insects, bringing instant death to hundreds of lives.)

THE CURTAIN SLOWLY DESCENDS

CONFESSION

(Initial Performance)

By the Indiana Little Theater Society, Indianapolis,
Indiana

With the following cast:

WALT MULLINS *Robert Wilds*

SKEET JONES *Ralph F. Thompson*

MME. BERTHARD *Margaret Jean Gilmore*

GERMAINE *Mlle. Marguerite Dobey*

Under the Direction of George Somnes,

CONFESSION

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

MME. BERTHARD

GERMAINE, *her daughter*

WALT MULLINS

SKEET JONES, *his buddy*

PLACE: *Buvette du Bon Temps, near an American rest camp, on the outskirts of Bar-le-Duc (Meuse), France*

SCENE: *The café*

TIME: *A rainy night in August, 1918*

It is a large, gloomy room, poorly illuminated by a single hanging lamp suspended from the beamed ceiling. The walls on two sides are flanked by tables and chairs. At the back, opening upon the road, is a high double door, with large windows on either side. At right, down stage, is a short wooden bar with the comptoir adjoining it. An L-shaped stairway, left, leads up to the living quarters of the BERTHARDS. The walls bear various posters advertising the usual brands of apéritifs and liqueurs; also, posters announcing the latest Emprunt National. As the curtain rises WALT MULLINS, a lanky, stolid fellow in an ill-fitting uniform of an American private, is discovered sitting at one of the tables, down stage left, with a half-empty bottle of wine before him. On the opposite side of the stage at the comp-

toir sits MME. BERTHARD, a sweet-faced, gray-haired Frenchwoman of perhaps fifty, knitting mechanically. Beside her on a stool is her daughter, GERMAINE, a dark-haired young girl of about eighteen. GERMAINE is absorbed in a book, and mutters perplexedly to herself from time to time.

GERMAINE (*looking up at her mother*)

Zut, mais c'est difficile! Je n'apprendrais jamais la langue de ces Américains.

MME. BERTHARD

Sois patiente, ma fille, essaye encore.

GERMAINE (*sighing*)

Oui, maman.

MME. BERTHARD

Tout ce qui vaut quelque chose en ce monde est difficile à apprendre.

GERMAINE (*reading from her grammar*)

"Wat 'as thee yong mahn een 'is—bahsket?"

MME. BERTHARD

Qu'est-ce que c'est? "Bahsket."

GERMAINE

C'est un panier. Maintenant nous allons voir ce que cet idiot avait dans son panier. (*Reading.*) "E 'as a bahl, ahn appel, a feesh, a nahpkeen, a lettair, ahnd—ah—ah—ah, ça c'est impossible pour moi!"

MME. BERTHARD (*nodding towards WALT*)

Demande à cet Américain, là-bas, de t'aider.

GERMAINE

Il va se moquer de moi, comme les autres.

MME. BERTHARD

Tu es folle, ma petite.

CONFESSION

GERMAINE

Et puis, je crois qu'il ne veut pas être dérangé. Il n'a pas l'air aussi insouciant et gai que la plupart des Américains qui viennent ici.

MME. BERTHARD

Le pauvre garçon est sans doute triste, parce qu'il est loin de chez lui et de ceux qu'il aime. Cela ne doit pas être gai de se retrouver ainsi dans un pays étranger, et dont on ne connaît pas la langue.

(The outside door opens. It is another American soldier, "SKEET" JONES. He is short of stature and muscular. He unfastens his dripping raincoat and removes his overseas cap, shaking the water from it.)

SKEET (*cheerfully*)

Fine night for ducks! Bong swar, Madame Berthard. Comment allez-vous this evening, Germaine?

GERMAINE (*closing her book*)

Très bien—merci!

MME. BERTHARD

Bonsoir, M'sieu' Skeet! Il fait très mauvais au dehors, n'est-ce-pas?

SKEET (*pantomiming*)

Oui, oui! Beaucoup rain. Comin' down like cats and dogs! I'll tell the world!

MME. BERTHARD

C'est votre ami là-bas au coin.

SKEET (*looking around*)

Oh, hullo, Walt, how're you comin'! I been down at the Y.M. hut writin' my girl. Been waitin' for me long?

GARDEN VARIETIES

WALT (*quietly*)

Not very.

SKEET (*seeing bottle*)

I see you ain't been wastin' your time. Germaine didn't give you any coneyac, did she?

GERMAINE (*crossing*)

Que lui avez-vous dit, M'sieu Skeet?

SKEET (*chucking her under the chin*)

Never mind, kid. I was just tellin' Walt here that you were a beaucoup jolie baby!

GERMAINE (*highly pleased*)

Zome keed!

SKEET

Atta time! You'll be speakin' an honest-to-God languidge yet. How you comin' along with your English lessons? Know what "Gimme a kiss" means?

WALT

Let her be, Skeet.

SKEET (*sitting*)

Germaine, how about a shot of that van blank of yours?

GERMAINE

Vin blanc? Oui, tout de suite!

(GERMAINE goes to bar to get SKEET a bottle.)

SKEET (*looking closely at WALT*)

Come on, Walt. Shake it off—the first hundred years the hardest.

WALT

I just been sittin' here thinkin'.

CONFESSION

SKEET

Don't pay to think. Drink up your red ink, for to-morrow the Heinies may get you.

WALT

Aw, I'm all right.

SKEET

If you ask me, I bet you got a case of homesickness.

WALT

Homesick! I ain't got no girl to get back to like you.

SKEET

What's wrong then? Loosen up and tell a fella. . . .

WALT

Nothin' the matter . . . just fed up.

SKEET

Well, you ain't been yourself lately. That's all I know. (*Patting his raincoat disgustedly.*) I'm soaked to the hide! Might as well be wearin' a sieve.

WALT

Why don't you take it off?

SKEET (*removing raincoat*)

Them dirty Q.M. grafters oughta be hung, issuin' a slicker like this here one. Well, it's a great life if you don't weaken.

(*GERMAINE crosses with bottle and glass, which she puts before SKEET.*)

GERMAINE

Voilà!

SKEET

Combieng, sweetheart?

GARDEN VARIETIES

GERMAINE

Vingt-cinq sous, M'sieu'.

SKEET (*handing her a two-franc note*)

Keep the change.

(GERMAINE *misunderstands and starts to count out the change for the soldier.*)

SKEET

No! Pour vous . . . pour vous! What good is one of them United cigar coupons to me?

GERMAINE

Oh, merci, M'sieu' Skeet. Merci!

(GERMAINE *returns to her book.*)

SKEET

That's a cute little jane, Walt, as these foreigners go. I wish't her mother didn't watch her so close. . . .

(SKEET *looks at WALT. He apparently has not heard a word that SKEET said.*)

SKEET

Say, what's eatin' on you, Walt?

WALT (*guardedly*)

Nothin', I tell you. . . . Hear anything down at headquarters?

SKEET

About Jake Dyson?

WALT

What they goin' to do with him?

SKEET

He's done for. They're goin' to have him shot.

WALT (*gripping SKEET's arm*)

You ain't kiddin' me, Skeet!

CONFESSION

SKEET

What you think I am! Jake was found guilty on both charges—Ninety-second Article of War. You know, "shall suffer death or imprisonment for life, as the court-martial may direct."

WALT

They're goin' to shoot him . . . !

SKEET

Just before I left town they'd posted the court-martial decision, and the whole detachment's buzzin' about it.

WALT

What they sayin'?

SKEET

Same talk that goes on out at camp—that Jake gotta raw deal—but he's sure S.O.L. now.

WALT

You can't get a square deal in this man's army. Might as well look for a needle in a haystack!

SKEET

You said it! (*Confidentially.*) And when it comes right down to it, Walt, you know as well as me, that dirty skunk of a Lieutenant Stivers got what was comin' to him.

WALT (*savagely*)

I hope he's rottin' in Hell right now!

SKEET

Still, a buck private can't expect to murder his own lieutenant and get away with it. Any way you look at it, it's first degree murder.

GARDEN VARIETIES

WALT

Yeh, if it was Jake that done it. . . .

SKEET

It's sure tough to think of a good guy like Jake goin' up before a firin' squad for doin' what any of us was just itchin' to do.

WALT

Wonder how he took it when he heard the sentence?

SKEET

They say he broke down and cried like a baby, and then apologized to the court for givin' way. Jake told 'em it was only 'cause he knew it would kill his mother back in the States when she heard.

WALT

Jake still kept on sayin' he wasn't guilty—to the last?

SKEET

Yeh—he wouldn't admit nothin'. Like as not he never done it at all. A lot o' hard-boiled majors and colonels listen to a bunch of phony evidence. . . . Justice! It's enough to make you puke!

WALT

About all they know was that Jake had some trouble with Stivers.

SKEET

And that Jake was heard sayin' in his squad tent he was goin' to get him. You know, Corporal Mason heard him say it, and Watson and Thibeau and Oschner.

WALT

Well, that don't prove nothin'.

CONFESSION

SKEET

Then, of course, the thing that looked worst for Jake was the top sergeant catchin' him sittin' on his bunk after taps cleanin' his .45 that night they found Stivers murdered along the road.

WALT

That mighta been on account of inspection next morning.

SKEET

Sure! But to them court-martial birds that's enough to convict him. They'd hang their own mother, they would!

WALT

Where they got Jake now. . . ?

SKEET

Right after the sentence the guards took him on the train. He's goin' to be shot on the first day of September—at daybreak.

WALT (*scarcely audible*)

Know where they took him?

SKEET

They say at headquarters they're takin' him to the A.E.F. prison down at Tours, till his time comes.

WALT

Down at Tours. . . .

SKEET

Ever since back in Camp Merritt when Stivers was assigned to our outfit he seemed to try to see just how many guys he could make hate him.

WALT

Oh, he was meek as a lamb when he was talkin' to

GARDEN VARIETIES

officers that outranked him. Them bullies always are that way.

SKEET

I just come an ace of sloughin' him myself that day we landed in Brest. Remember him hittin' little Gus in the mouth for not turnin' out at reveille. And Gus, then, with the flu and a fever of over a hunderd.

WALT

A week before he was killed I saw him go in the mess hall and throw a pot of boiling coffee at one o' the K.P.'s for nothin' at all. . . . It was all I could do to hold myself. . . .

SKEET

Well, Stivers's hit his last soldier and done his last dirty trick on this earth.

WALT

But to think o' Jake Dyson. . . . God!

(The two men sit meditating silently. After a moment there is heard the ominous rumble of heavy motor trucks approaching along the road outside the buvette. It is a French ammunition convoy on its way to the front.)

SKEET

How'dja like to be drivin' one of them babies on a night like this!

WALT

Anything 'ud be better'n layin' round a damn rest camp, like us.

SKEET

Don't kid yourself! Steerin' one of them five-ton trucks loaded to the guards, over these lousy roads,

CONFESSION

without lights, and black as the ace of spades . . . and rainin' at that! You gotta hand it to these here frog drivers.

WALT

They been goin' through all evening.

SKEET

That means we'll be movin' up into the trenches any time now. They're all sayin' there's goin' to be one hell of a drive break purty soon. . . . Lissen to 'em come!

(The convoy is now passing the door of the Buvette de Bon Temps. MME. BERTHARD and GERMAINE run to the door, looking out.)

SKEET

You heard the dope, ain't you, Walt, about it bein' up round the Saint Mihiel sector?

WALT

Yeh, but I don't care. . . .

SKEET

Whatdyuh mean you don't care! You ain't gettin' yellow, are yuh?

WALT

Mebbe . . . I'm plum' disgusted. . . .

SKEET

Well, c'est la guerre, and what are you going to do about it!

WALT

Back in the States I left my job up in the best lumber camp in Minnesota to fight, but nothin's been like I expected. One thing after another's come up to make me hate the army, and myself even worse.

GARDEN VARIETIES

SKEET

It ain't all been like them enlistment posters said, has it?

(WALT *does not reply.*)

SKEET

You're sure down in the dumps to-night, Walt.

WALT (*after an effort*)

Skeet, you and me been buddies a good while, ain't we?

SKEET

Ever since they stuck us in the same squad 'way back there in Camp Taylor.

WALT

Well, there's somethin' I wanta tell you. I've made up my mind to go A.W.O.L.

SKEET

You're talkin' through your hat! Clear cuckoo!

WALT

Mebbe.

SKEET

You gotta clean record, so far. What you wanta spoil it for now?

WALT

Yeh, I gotta clean record!

SKEET

Well, what's the big idea?

WALT

I can't stand it out there in camp a day longer.

SKEET

Goin' A.W.O.L.'s a piker's trick.

CONFESSION

WALT

Mebbe.

SKEET

The M.P.'s 'll pick you up and you'll get throwed in the brig and lose part pay. . . . It ain't worth it!

WALT

What've I got to lose?

SKEET

What's the sense in roamin' round in a God-forsaken country where you don't know two words of the languidge?

WALT

I'll get by some way.

SKEET

But where'll you go? They won't even let you light in Paris. And if you do, you're liable to get that Hard-boiled Smith on your neck.

WALT

I'm not plannin' on Paris.

SKEET

Where then, for God's sake?

WALT

For one thing, I wanta go down to Tours prison to see Jake.

SKEET

Whatever for do you wanta see him?

WALT

I dunno. . . . I just wanta see him, that's all.

SKEET

They won't let you to him without an order from the skipper.

WALT

I'll see him. . . .

SKEET

Now lissen, you better stay right here in camp. You can't do Jake no good now.

WALT

I ain't so sure. . . .

SKEET

There's been enough court-martials in our outfit already without you—

WALT

Just the same, I'm goin', Skeet, and goin' to-night.

SKEET

How you goin' to get outa here—steal the general's car?

WALT

There's a frog train leavin' Bar-le-Duc at eleven. I'll ride that.

SKEET (*disgustedly*)

I always thought you had some sense! Is there *nothin'* I can say to stop you!

WALT

Nothin', Skeet. I've made up my mind. . . . I'm goin' up to camp and write a letter to Maw and get a few things in my barrack bag I'll need.

SKEET

Aw, you give me a pain. . . !

(MME. BERTHARD glances at the clock, and with a gesture of surprise lays aside her knitting. She rises and crosses to the table where WALT and SKEET are sitting.)

MME. BERTHARD

Fini, mes amis!

WALT

What's fini?

MME. BERTHARD (*pointing to clock*)

Il est huit heures et d'mi'

SKEET

Have a heart, Madame! Leave me and Walt set here. I wanta talk to him.

MME. BERTHARD (*good humoredly*)

Mauvais garnements! Allons, s'il vous plait.

SKEET

Walt, the old lady says we gotta vamoose.

WALT

I'm ready.

SKEET

If you ask me, Madame, I think it's a damn dirty trick to put us out in the rain.

MME. BERTHARD

C'est le règlement. Les ordres de la police militaire américaine. . . .

SKEET (*putting on his slicker*)

Well, I s'pose there's nothin' to do but git.

WALT

It ain't their fault they kick us out.

SKEET

Blame Pershing and his lousy General Orders!

WALT

We just got time to make it back to camp before taps.

SKEET

Yeh, and if I know anything you're goin' to stay in camp—if I hafta hog-tie you, you son of a gun!

WALT

We'll see. . . .

SKEET (*as he passes GERMAINE*)

Bong Nuee, kiddo . . . dormez bien.

GERMAINE

Bonne nuit, M'essieu'.

MME. BERTHARD

Bonne nuit, M'essieu'.

(WALT and SKEET step out into the dark road. As soon as the two have left, MME. BERTHARD and her daughter set about to close the shop for the night.)

MME. BERTHARD (*talking as she works*)

Drôles de gens que ces Américains. Des grands garçons, pleins de gaieté et d'entrain, mais on ne sait jamais les comprendre. . . . (*Stops to look out of window.*) Oh, quelle mauvaise nuit!

GERMAINE (*listening*)

Voici quelques camions qui vont au front!

(MME BERTHARD opens the door facing the road and beckons to her daughter.)

MME. BERTHARD

Germaine, viens avec moi dehors m'aider à fermer les volets.

GERMAINE (*following her mother*)

Oui, maman.

(The two women go out and are seen through the large front windows of the café lowering the shutters. There is heard the rumbling of another am-

munition truck. The noise becomes louder and louder as the camion approaches the buvette. Soon it is passing the door. GERMAINE stands in the doorway and waves to the driver.)

GERMAINE (*shouting*)

On les aura! Allez-y, mes braves!

MME. BERTHARD (*as the rumbling grows fainter*)

Oh, j'espère que cette attaque sera la dernière, et que ton père reviendra enfin à la maison.

GERMAINE

Cela ne sera pas long maintenant. La paix est en vue. . . . Les braves Alliés. . . !

(MME. BERTHARD is about to close the doors, when there is heard a call for help coming from the direction of the American rest camp.)

GERMAINE

Ecoutez!

MME. BERTHARD

Qu'est-ce que c'est?

GERMAINE

Mon Dieu! (*As the cry comes nearer.*) Cela ressemble à la voix de M'sieu' Skeet!

MME. BERTHARD (*peering out into the darkness*)

Mon Dieu! Qu'est-ce qu'il-y-a!

(GERMAINE darts out to answer the call.)

MME. BERTHARD (*frightened*)

Viens—ici! Germaine, reviens!

(*A moment later SKEET comes staggering into the room carrying WALT MULLINS on his shoulders. WALT is hanging limply with his head down. GERMAINE tries to help.*)

GARDEN VARIETIES

SKEET (*panting under the weight*)

Walt's been run over by one o' them French trucks!
He's bad hurt!

GERMAINE

Ce sont les camions! L'Américain a été écrasé!

SKEET

Get busy! Fix me a place to lay him!

MME. BERTHARD (*moaning*)

O. . . !

GERMAINE

Qu'allons-nous faire. Le pauvre gosse!

SKEET

For God's sake, do somethin'!

GERMAINE

Couchez-le ici, M'sieu' Skeet!

(SKEET *places* WALT *tenderly on the floor.*)

SKEET

There, old scout, you'll be all jake purty soon. . . .

MME. BERTHARD (*to* GERMAINE)

Dépêche-toi, va chercher des couvertures et des coussins en-haut!

(GERMAINE *hurries up the stairs to fulfill the errand, while SKEET bends over the prostrate form of his comrade, loosening his blouse.*)

SKEET

Come on, Walt, shake it off! Where'd they get you, Buddy? Lissen, I'm goin' to beat it back to camp for a doc! I won't be gone a second! (*To* MME. BERTHARD.) Watch him, I'm goin' for help!

MME. BERTHARD (*helplessly*)

Je ne comprends pas . . . je ne comprends pas. . . .

CONFESSION

SKEET (*roughly*)

Lissen! Docteur. . . . Docteur Américain. . . .
Savez!

MME. BERTHARD

Docteur! Oui! Allez vite! Je crains qu'il soit très gravement blessé.

(*As soon as SKEET runs out the door, MME BERTHARD goes to the bar, returning with a glass of rum. Holding WALT's head in her lap she forces a draught between his lips. Presently he stirs and gives a faint groan.*)

MME. BERTHARD

Ah, ça va mieux maintenant. Reposez-vous tranquillement, vous serez bientôt soulagé. Votre camarade est parti au camp chercher le médecin.

(*GERMAINE comes down the stairs with the bed clothing. With an effort the two place WALT on an improvised pallet, with a pillow under his head. The two women regard him anxiously.*)

WALT (*mumbling*)

There's somethin' . . . wrong! Leave me be, can't-cha! . . . I wanta tell you fellas somethin'. . . .

GERMAINE

Il essaye de parler!

WALT (*singing crazily*)

"Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag,
And smile, smile, smile. . . ."

MME. BERTHARD

Il délire. . . !

(*Suddenly WALT opens his eyes, staring dazedly about him for some time.*)

GERMAINE (*whispering*)

Il revient á lui!

WALT (*weakly*)

They got me, I guess. . . . (*With a grim smile.*)
Come over here to fight, and bumped off by a
truck. . . !

MME. BERTHARD (*breathlessly*)

Que dit-il?

WALT (*trying to look back of him*)

You back there, Skeet? (*Terrified at no answer.*)
Skeet! Skeet! (*Whimpering.*) That ain't like you,
Skeet, to try to kid me—when I'm like this. . . !

MME. BERTHARD (*desperately*)

M'sieu' Skeet est parti chercher le médecin au camp!
Comprenez . . . médecin!

WALT (*panic-stricken*)

Skeet, you ain't left me now—when I'm goin' to die!
(*To MME. BERTHARD.*) I gotta talk to him—d'you
hear—I gotta!

MME. BERTHARD

Vous devez rester tranquille, c'est très mauvais de
vous énerver. Votre camarade sera bientôt de retour.

WALT (*viciously*)

Cut out that dirty frog lingo! Why don't you speak
my languidge! (*His anger fades.*) Jesus! Jesus!
Don't let me die till I can tell 'em the truth! Honest,
I was goin' A.W.O.L. to Tours—to-night—to give
myself up! Jake's gotta go free!

GERMAINE

Il délire—le pauvre gosse. . . !

CONFESSION

MME. BERTHARD

Ils sont toujours comme cela quand ils souffrent terriblement. C'est l'angoisse! L'instinct de la mort!

WALT (*shouting*)

I done it—I killed Stivers. . . . I'm a bad egg—and I know it—but that's the God's truth!

(*He sinks back on the pillow panting.* GERMAINE goes to the comptoir and returns to WALT's side with her English-French grammar.)

GERMAINE (*reading*)

"Yoor camarade weel cohm bahck soon."

MME. BERTHARD (*pitifully*)

Il ne comprends pas. . . .

(WALT opens his eyes once more and regards the women calmly.)

WALT

Ladies—I—I ain't goin' to last long. . . . For God's sake, try to understand me! Tell 'em I shot Lieutenant Stivers—not Jake Dyson! I'm confessin' it here—now. . . .

(MME. BERTHARD and GERMAINE stare at WALT dumbly.)

WALT (*fervently*)

Oh, Christ, make 'em understand me! Jake can't die for somethin' I did! (*He breaks off with a moan.*) He can't! He can't!

MME. BERTHARD

Comme il souffre . . . pauvre gosse.

(GERMAINE goes to door to see if SKEET is coming.)

WALT (*frantically*)

I gotta get back to camp! (*Tries to rise.*) I gotta tell 'em the truth! (GERMAINE hurries to WALT's

GARDEN VARIETIES

*side to help her mother hold him.) Leave me loose!
I gotta see Skeet—I gotta tell him! (Screaming.)
Leave go me, you damned—
(WALT gives a gasp. With one last effort he tries
to rise, but the two hold him firmly.)*

MME. BERTHARD (*horrified*)

Oh! Dieu! Du sang! Son agitation a causé une
hémorragie!

*(A thin stream of blood trickles from WALT's mouth.
He gives a choking cough and his head sinks limply
back upon the pillow. There is a tense silence. MME.
BERTHARD puts her ear to WALT's breast.)*

GERMAINE (*in a whisper*)

Il est mort?

*(MME. BERTHARD crosses herself in reply. SKEET
dashes into the room. He is so out of breath that he
can scarcely speak.)*

SKEET

It's all right, Walt—the doc's comin'! Is he still un-
conscious?

(The two women stand by mutely.)

SKEET (*leaning over WALT's lifeless body*)

Come on, brace up, Walt! They're comin' with an
ambulance to take you back to camp. Hey, Walt!

*(SKEET shakes him gently; slowly the truth dawns
upon him.)*

MME. BERTHARD

Il est mort.

SKEET (*aghast*)

Dead! Walt dead! *(Puts his head to WALT's
heart.)* Walt! *(Turning savagely upon the women.)*

Why the hell didn't you do something for him!

CONFESSION

(Kneeling over WALT again, he takes his hand.)
Oh, Walt, I didn't know you was as bad as that! I wouldn't of left you. . . . Honest! Before you went—maybe you had somethin' to say to me. . . .
(In the distance a bugle from the American camp sounds taps.)

THE CURTAIN SLOWLY FALLS

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

(Initial Performance)

By the Earnest Players, Manual Training High School
Auditorium, Indianapolis, Indiana

With the following cast:

ELMER SWANK *H. L. Earnest*

HONEY *Bernice Van Sickle*

CHARLEY *Jack Broderick*

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THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

ELMER SWANK

"HONEY," *his wife*

CHARLEY GOTT, *a neighbor*

SCENE: *The Swank home, East Main Street, Coreyville, Ohio*

TIME: *Nine o'clock in the morning*

Our setting is the sitting room of a four-room bungalow. At back there is a door opening upon the front porch. Near the door is a window smothered in lace curtains and a luxurious growth of maidenhair fern, potted in a cuspidor-like jardinière. Up stage, right, is a door leading into the Swank bedroom; another door, right down stage, probably leads to the dining room. In the left wall is a closed grate with a small Japanese screen before it. The room is finished in the most golden of oak, and the wall paper is a study in grapes and roses. The furniture, which is of the Sears-Roebuck school, includes a piano, a davenport of shiny imitation leather, two rocking chairs and a Morris chair. A library table, center, bears a flowery red-shaded lamp, a post card album, a Bible and numerous magazines. A kewpie, a clock and seashells adorn the mantel. On the wall are three pictures: a foamy print showing the Maid of the Mist battling with the flood beneath Niagara; a highly colored crayon portrait of ELMER at the age of three;

and a flaming chromo of a pudgy little tot dangling a bunch of cherries before a dignified Newfoundland dog. . . . The Swanks have as nice a home as any couple in Coreyville; and it is all paid for, too.

As the curtain rises MRS. SWANK, "HONEY," is discovered at the front door. She is reaching out to see what the postman left in the mail box. She is quite young and bridelike, and might even be called pretty were it not for a disfiguring gingham house dress and boudoir cap. She is humming contentedly. Presently she comes down stage with a magazine and a letter. Tearing open the envelope, she carelessly throws it on the table with the magazine and sits down to read its contents. Instantly the humming ceases and her expression changes. The letter must contain exceedingly bad news. She gives a dismayed little grunt. After a hurried rereading she begins to pace the floor. It is plain to see that HONEY is vastly worried over something. She goes to the window.

HONEY (calling out to her husband)

Elmer! Elmer!

ELMER (from the garage)

Yoo-hoo, Honey!

HONEY (tearfully)

Elmer, come here—something dreadful's happened! . . . Come quick!

(She returns to the table, seizes the letter, crumples it up and kicks it viciously under the table. Then, covering her face with her hands she gives herself up to violent weeping. She is thus engaged when ELMER SWANK bursts panting into the room. He is dressed in overalls and clutches a monkey wrench in one hand. He has just come from doing something

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

to his Ford. ELMER is some years older than his wife, and is in danger of becoming fat.)

ELMER (*wild-eyed*)

What's happened, Honey! What's the matter!

(HONEY continues to weep, heeding not her husband's frantic inquiries.)

ELMER (*kneeling beside her*)

What is it? Are you scared? Are you hurt?

Honey, tell Elmer!

HONEY (*sobbing lustily*)

Oh—I—you—!

ELMER

Tell Elmer—where does it hurt most?

HONEY (*her hand over her heart*)

Here—right here!

ELMER (*anxiously*)

Your tummy, darling?

HONEY

No! My heart—Elmer—you've broken it!

ELMER

Oh, Honey, how can you say such a thing!

HONEY

Because you have! (*Sniffing.*) Give me your handkerchief.

ELMER (*complying*)

How have I? What have I done?

HONEY

Everything! (*Blows her nose.*) And I thought you were so—so—and just think, we haven't been married a year!

GARDEN VARIETIES

ELMER

What *are* you driving at?

HONEY

No use pretending, Elmer. It won't do any good.

ELMER (*becoming irritated*)

Who's pretending! I'm out there putting some oil in the Ford, and you give a yell to come that scares the giblets outa me! All I want to know is, what for!

HONEY

Anyhow, it's all over between us, Elmer. . . .

ELMER

All over!

HONEY

I found out everything in a letter.

ELMER

A letter?

HONEY

That just came in the mail.

ELMER

But, what'd it say?

HONEY

Telling about you up at the city last week.

ELMER

Me! What could it say about me, I'd like to know!

HONEY (*with a fresh wail*)

Even the neighbors knew about it before I did!

ELMER

Knew what? Where's the letter?

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

HONEY

There, on the floor! And I loved and trusted you,
Elmer. . . .

(ELMER *picks up the letter from under the table and smooths it out.*)

ELMER

Who wrote it?

HONEY

That's what I can't stand! It's anonymous!

ELMER

Anonymous!

HONEY

Everybody in town is talking about us, I just know!

ELMER

And you'll believe what an unsigned letter says before
you'll believe me?

HONEY

I certainly do believe it!

ELMER

Why, Honey, I'm ashamed of you!

HONEY (*reaching for letter*)

Give it to me, and we'll see who ought to be the most
ashamed.

ELMER

I'll read it.

HONEY

No, I'll read it. So's you can see what you've brought
on yourself and me!

ELMER

I wouldn't, Honey. It'll get you all upset again.

GARDEN VARIETIES

HONEY (*reading regardless*)

"DEAR MRS. SWANK [*she blows her nose loudly*] : While up at Columbus last week attending the Elks' Convention your husband was seen making a spectacle of himself in a certain shady chop suey restaurant in the company of another woman. [HONEY *looks up to see how ELMER is taking it. He starts to speak, but she hastily continues.*] From her rowdy actions we would say that the party in question was more than slightly under the influence of liquor."

ELMER (*vehemently*)

It's a lie—it's all lies!

HONEY (*continuing*)

"Obviously you don't know anything about your husband's carryings on when he's up there to the city, and we women think, as friends of yours, that you had ought to know about it while there is yet time to nip his actions in the bud. (Signed) Your friends." (*As she finishes HONEY bursts into fresh sobs.*)

ELMER

"Your friends"! Can you imagine your *friends* writing like that just to hurt you!

HONEY (*stoically*)

The truth always hurts.

ELMER

There's not a word of truth in it! It's all a pack of lies. Dirty lies!

HONEY

I can't believe you, Elmer. It fits in too well with what I smelled on you when you got back.

ELMER

You mean that perfumery?

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

HONEY

You know what I mean.

ELMER

But I explained how that come about once!

HONEY

I believed you then, but I can't on top of this.

(She holds up the letter under his nose, and then puts it on the table.)

ELMER *(desperately)*

So help me God, it was the truth! Charley Gott and some of us went out to a cabaret, and the chorus girls came down among the tables and squirted us with atomizers of perfumery.

HONEY

I wouldn't believe you now on a stack of Bibles!

ELMER

We never even said "booh" to them. Honest! Just ask Charley if it wasn't thataway.

HONEY *(with narrowed eyes)*

Naturally he'd lie for you!

ELMER

He'd do no such thing! Charley's got honor.

HONEY *(angrily)*

None of you men have got honor. You lie for each other as easy as you breathe!

ELMER *(weakly)*

Now, Honey—

HONEY

You slip out of town on any old excuse and leave your poor green wives at home while you raise Ned with fast women up at the city.

GARDEN VARIETIES

ELMER (*indignantly*)

Do you call being a delegate to the Elks' State Convention "any old excuse"?

HONEY

With some it's lodge business, and with others just —business.

ELMER

You didn't talk thataway when I came home from lodge that night and told you I was elected delegate. Don't you remember how proud you was of me?

HONEY

That was before I had my eyes opened!

ELMER

Pshaw! Honey, I don't like to hear you talk like that.

HONEY (*relentlessly*)

'Course you don't! Well, you might as well get used to it. From now on I'm not going to be a little idiot, and swallow everything you tell me. I'm going to be like any other wife who's learned from experience that she can't trust her husband.

ELMER (*meekly*)

Honey, you know you can trust me.

HONEY (*snorting*)

I do, do I? You think you can go off on a tear and ease your conscience by bringing me a two-pound box of candy. (*Pause.*) Oh, I used to be one of these trustful wives—I was even until this morning—but I can see now you're all alike.

ELMER

No, really Honey. . . .

(ELMER *is perspiring freely.*)

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

HONEY

Just the other night at the Ladies' Aid social they were talking about how Leroy Gall cuts up when he's up at the city without his wife. And they were pitying Mrs. Gall, saying "poor Mrs. Gall," in that mean way and shaking their heads.

ELMER

You surely don't put me in the class with Leroy Gall!

HONEY (*growing tearful again*)

I can just hear them now all along here on East Main Street, getting their heads together and saying behind my back, "Poor Mrs. Elmer Swank—isn't it a shame!" Oh, I know them too well!

ELMER

But, Honey, I tell you, they got no right to talk! I never *looked* at another woman all the time I was away from you—let alone eat chop suey with one.

HONEY

That don't sound reasonable. The Elks are known for being high flyers when they get out together. I've heard you say so yourself time and again.

ELMER (*wanting to change the subject*)

Well, what I'd like to know is what dirty, sneaking busybodies sent you that letter.

HONEY (*frigidly*)

Finding out won't make your wrong a right.

ELMER

But, Honey, I tell you, I haven't done any wrong!

HONEY

That's what you say!

GARDEN VARIETIES

ELMER (*thinking*)

It might have been Lottie Fulmer; she's always snooping around in other people's business. Or I wouldn't put it past Sarah Fruits and her flock of old hens. . . .

HONEY

It isn't likely to be her, with her husband up at the city there at the same time as you.

ELMER (*earnestly*)

I'd give a silver dollar to know.

HONEY (*flaring up again*)

What good is it going to do you to know? You denied it up and down, and you can see the effect it's had on me. If you deny it folks will only laugh at you. . . . But I'm the one that suffers most. I'll never be able to hold up my head in town again!

ELMER (*helplessly*)

Oh, don't say that!

HONEY (*sobbing again*)

It's the truth! And I used to think you were going to be such a *good* husband!

ELMER (*putting his arms around her*)

I tell you I didn't do it!

HONEY (*repulsing him*)

Go away! I don't ever want to see you again! You've killed my love. . . .

ELMER

What can I say—

HONEY

Nothing! Just leave me be! I'm going over to my cousin's in Xenia—right to-day!

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

(ELMER is thunderstruck. He gasps. He hadn't thought married life would be like this.)

ELMER (*frantically clinging to her arm*)

Honey, you wouldn't leave me on account of that damn letter!

HONEY (*struggling*)

Don't you curse at me, Elmer Swank! Leave go me—you're hurting!

(ELMER releases her and she runs into the bedroom and slams the door after her. There is the sound of a key turning in the lock. ELMER is beside himself with dismay. He crosses unsteadily to the bedroom door.)

ELMER (*knocking in a frenzy*)

Honey! Honey! Let me in! Please! (*He waits a moment; no sound from within.*) Honey, I'm sorry for what I said. (*Another pause.*) You wouldn't leave your Elmer what loves you, like this! (*The sound of a trunk lid being thrown back strikes chill to his heart.*) After all, I'm your husband, ain't I, Honey?

HONEY (*from within*)

Not after what's happened!

(*For a time ELMER renews his entreaties. Finally, however, he gives up exhausted. It is indeed a black day for ELMER. He wanders dazedly to the window and looks out. Suddenly he becomes animated, and rushes to the front door.*)

ELMER (*calling into the street*)

Hey! Charley! Come here a minute, can you?

(*In another minute CHARLEY GOTT, a neighbor and fellow-Elk, walks in. CHARLEY is as sophisticated*

GARDEN VARIETIES

as ELMER is naïve. CHARLEY dresses well and is a bachelor.)

CHARLEY

What's on your mind, Elmer?

ELMER

I've got to see you, Charley.

CHARLEY

You look like you just seen a ghost.

ELMER

I just had a fuss with Honey. She's leaving me—she's going away.

CHARLEY

You don't tell me!

ELMER

For God's sake, Charley, do something to stop her!

CHARLEY

Come on, old man, brace up! What did it start over?

ELMER

She's found out about that girl I had out last week up at Columbus.

CHARLEY

You poor fish! I hope you didn't tell her. . . !

ELMER

Not so loud—Honey'll hear you! . . . 'Course I didn't tell her.

CHARLEY

Then for the love of Mike, how . . . ?

ELMER

Some dirty sneaks sent her an anonymous letter.

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

CHARLEY

An anonymous letter!

ELMER

Telling her all about what happened.

CHARLEY

Who could it have been, do you suppose?

ELMER (*hopelessly*)

That don't cut any ice now; the damage's done.

CHARLEY

Couldn't you lie out of it?

ELMER

I tried but she wouldn't listen to me . . . and now I'm losing her. . . .

CHARLEY

Pooh! You can't lose 'em! She's just trying to scare you.

ELMER (*whimperingly*)

You don't know Honey!

CHARLEY

They're all alike. I don't see as there's anything to get all worked up about.

ELMER

Oh, don't you! I can't help thinking, Charley, if it hadn't been for you—

CHARLEY (*angrily*)

Don't you blame it on me, Elmer! You know you said you wanted a wild woman and a big time that night. I didn't have to push Daisy on you. I suppose you forgot you asked me to get you a date!

GARDEN VARIETIES

ELMER

But I didn't realize what I was doing. . . .

CHARLEY

You went into it with your eyes open, and you know it!

ELMER

I didn't have a good time . . . and now look what it's got me into!

CHARLEY

Well, no use crying over spilt milk. Let's see if we can't patch it up with the wife. I'm a good liar.

ELMER

That's just what Honey said! It's no use. . . .

CHARLEY (*unruffled*)

Give me a try at it. Call her out.

ELMER

She won't come—she's locked the door. (*Fervently.*)
Oh, if I ever get out of this mess, I'll never do it again!

CHARLEY

I've heard many a married man say that before.

ELMER

I mean it!

CHARLEY

Just what did the letter say?

ELMER (*listlessly*)

It's there on the table—read it for yourself.
(CHARLEY picks up the letter and examines it curiously.)

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

CHARLEY

There'll be a special hot room in Hell for anonymous letter writers.

ELMER

That don't help me any now. . . .

CHARLEY (*reading*)

Funny, there's always some one snooping around wanting to crab a good time. "Obviously you don't know anything about his carryings on up there, and we women think, as friends of yours. . . ." I like the way these cats call each other friends. If I had a friend that would send me a letter like that I'd break a hickory club over him!

ELMER (*piteously*)

What'll I do, Charley? What would *you* do in a fix like this?

CHARLEY (*thoughtfully*)

I can't exactly say, right off. But you might call her out and make a clean breast of it. I've heard women like that sorta thing.

ELMER

After I swore up and down it wasn't so! You don't know Honey!

CHARLEY

Seems to me I know that handwriting. Have you thought who might of sent it?

ELMER

No good. They likely disguised their handwriting.

CHARLEY

Let's see the envelope it came in.

GARDEN VARIETIES

ELMER (*looking around*)

I never saw it—must be around here somewheres, though.

(ELMER and CHARLEY search.)

CHARLEY

Maybe your wife's got it in with her.

ELMER (*giving up the search*)

It's no use looking for it.

CHARLEY

Well, it might be a clew.

ELMER (*looking at door*)

I'll bet Honey's about ready to leave. I got to find a way to stop her.

(CHARLEY is moving things about on the table. Underneath a magazine he finds the envelope. He holds it up and examines it closely. A broad grin breaks over his countenance.)

CHARLEY

Well, well, looky here, would you!

ELMER (*not much interested*)

What's the matter?

CHARLEY

Well, I'll be switched! Elmer, get ready for the surprise of your young life!

ELMER (*hurrying to CHARLEY's side*)

What is it, Charley?

CHARLEY

See! That letter isn't for you!

ELMER

What!

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

CHARLEY

This envelope is addressed to Mrs. Harry Swank,
West Main Street!

ELMER (*hardly comprehending*)

What! Harry Swank!

CHARLEY (*showing him*)

That's what it says. Read it for yourself.

ELMER (*not daring to believe such good news*)

You—you mean Honey got it by mistake!

CHARLEY (*patiently*)

Sure! That bone-head mail carrier delivered this letter to the wrong house. All this trouble should have happened on *West* Main Street, instead of *East*!

ELMER (*gibbering*)

I can't believe it! Call Honey! Quick!

CHARLEY

Keep your shirt on! Do you want to give yourself away?

ELMER (*his courage returning*)

Huh, well what do you know about Harry Swank getting caught in a jam like this—he passing the plate at church and all!

CHARLEY

Can't blame him for going on the loose, with a wife as homely as his.

ELMER (*complacently*)

I might have known this letter wasn't meant for me.

CHARLEY (*disgustedly*)

You needn't act so goody-goody. It's only by the grace of God this letter's for Harry instead of you. You're just as guilty as he is, and you know it!

GARDEN VARIETIES

ELMER

What'd I better do? Call Honey and show her the mistake?

CHARLEY

Wait a minute. Now, listen, I'm not married, but I do know some things about married life. If you manage this thing right you'll have something to hold over your wife for the rest of your days.

ELMER

What'll I do?

CHARLEY

By a piece of good luck you've got yourself in a position that few husbands ever get in. Now what you want to do is to act the big-hearted, fair-minded husband. Your wife's made a fool of herself over nothing, but you're willing to overlook it because you love her so much. Get what I mean?

ELMER

I'm to tell her I forgive her?

CHARLEY

That's it. Make her feel cheap. You'll have her eating out of your hand.

ELMER

I see—let bygones be bygones.

CHARLEY (*turning to go*)

You got it. I'll push along down to the office now. Good luck!

ELMER

Don't you want to stay and see me make her jump through the hoop?

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

CHARLEY

No—it's no treat for me. I get enough of these touching domestic scenes from seeing the movies.

ELMER (*shaking his hand*)

Well, Charley, I don't know how to thank you. . . .

CHARLEY

Don't try it. Not throwing any posies at myself, but it was a good thing you called me in.

ELMER (*fervently*)

I'll say so!

(CHARLEY GOTT goes out. ELMER can hardly contain himself for joy. He prances around the room, then going to the bedroom door he raps lightly.)

ELMER

Honey, let me in just a minute. I've got something to show you. (*There is no answer. ELMER raps sharply.*) Unlock the door, Honey, before I get mad!

HONEY (*off*)

I don't care how mad you get!

ELMER

Something's happened you ought to know about.

HONEY (*off*)

Nothing you can say will change me now—my mind's made up.

ELMER

But there's something that'll change everything!

HONEY (*off*)

What is it? You can tell me from there.

ELMER

No, I've got to show it to you.

HONEY (*off*)

Push it under the door.

ELMER

No, I won't. But you'll be sorry—that's all I got to say!

(There is a short silence. Then, slowly the lock turns in the door and HONEY comes out. She is dressed in a coat-suit and is wearing a hat.)

HONEY

Well, what is it?

ELMER (*playing cat and mouse with her*)

You still refuse to believe that I'm not mixed up in that letter?

HONEY (*about to reënter bedroom*)

We've been over that enough; I've told you how I feel, and if that's all you got to say—

ELMER (*intently*)

And you won't forgive me?

HONEY

My self-respect wouldn't allow it, even if my heart would.

ELMER

And you condemn me just by what you read in an anonymous letter?

HONEY (*impatiently*)

What have you got to show me?

ELMER (*drawing letter from behind his back*)

Look at this carefully inside and out, and then see if you think you have been exactly fair to me.

(HONEY takes the envelope. ELMER strikes a Sidney Carton pose: arms folded, eyes toward heaven.)

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

HONEY (*dazedly*)

Mrs. Harry Swank—*West* Main Street!

ELMER

That's what it says.

HONEY

You mean—you mean—

ELMER

That's your anonymous letter for you!

HONEY

And it wasn't to me at all!

ELMER (*elaborately gentle*)

You could have saved us both a lot of trouble, dear, if you had looked at the envelope before you read the letter.

HONEY (*bursting into tears*)

Oh, El—mer!

ELMER (*nobly*)

There, there, Honey! You did what you thought was right!

HONEY (*sinking abjectly at his feet*)

Oh, don't pity me!

ELMER

There, there, Honey. . . .

HONEY (*hysterically*)

Beat me! Kill me! I deserve it for ever doubting you!

ELMER (*feeling very magnanimous*)

Get up, Honey. It's all right.

GARDEN VARIETIES

HONEY (*from the depths of humiliation*)

I'm not fit for you—you're fine and true and good,
and I—oh!

ELMER

Let's forget all this and start over again.

HONEY

Oh, Elmer, *could* you ever forgive me?

ELMER

Of course, Honey.

HONEY

I'll try so hard to make it up to you for the way I acted.

ELMER

I know you will. . . .

HONEY

It was only because I loved you so much!

(ELMER is a trifle weary of his wife's emotional fireworks. He seeks to change the subject.)

ELMER

Do you think we ought to forward this letter on to Mrs. Harry Swank?

HONEY

Oh, no! It would make her *so* unhappy. It might even break up their home. (*Seizing upon the letter and tearing it into tiny bits.*) There! That'll never cause any more trouble. Oh, I'm so thankful!

ELMER (*fervently*)

So am I, honey. . . !

HONEY (*removing her hat*)

Sit in the Morris chair, Elmer. I want you to hold me.

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

(ELMER sits down, and HONEY cuddles up in his lap.)

ELMER

I ought to be getting back to fix the Ford, Honey.
The self-starter's on the blink—

HONEY (*kissing him*)

Let's just stay this way for a little while—it's been
such a hard morning on both of us.

ELMER

Yes, sweetheart. . . .

(*There is a comfortable silence. ELMER is thinking what a fine thing it is to be married.*)

HONEY (*after a moment*)

I was just thinking, Elmer. . . .

ELMER

Tell Elmer what about, Pet?

HONEY

Did you know Harry Swank ran with fast women
when he was up at the city?

ELMER

Why, of course not, Honey.

HONEY

I always thought he seemed so nice. You never
can tell about men by seeing them in their home town,
can you, Elmer?

ELMER (*soothingly*)

No, Pet . . . you can't.

HONEY (*murmuring contentedly*)

Poor Mrs. Harry Swank . . . isn't it a shame!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE CASINO GARDENS

(Initial Performance)

By the Little Theater Society of Indiana, Indianapolis,
Indiana

With the following cast:

VIOLIN		<i>Frederick Jaehne</i>
PIANO		<i>Clarence M. Weesner</i>
SAXOPHONE		<i>Eugene Franzman</i>
CORNET		<i>Alvin Dithrick</i>
TRAPS		<i>Harry Perine</i>
THE OLD MAN'S VOICE		<i>Walter Wray</i>

Under the Direction of George Somnes

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THE CASINO GARDENS

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

THE VIOLIN

THE PIANO

THE SAXOPHONE

THE CORNET

THE TRAPS

THE OLD MAN'S VOICE

SCENE: *The orchestral platform, Casino Gardens,
New York City*

TIME: *About ten o'clock, Gala Night*

The Casino Gardens is one of those garish dance halls in darkest Harlem, with a clientele composed largely of the spawn of the lesser boulevards. The admission for Gents is 60c, plus war tax. Ladies free. The manager—known to his employees as the Old Man—prides himself upon the fact that he allows no rough stuff. Except for an occasional fight the atmosphere of the Gardens is chock-full of refinement and elegance. Adorned in Tuxedo and dicky, each evening and Sunday afternoons the HARMONY FIVE orchestra administers aphrodisiacal rhythms to the dancers from a platform at one end of the hall. This rostrum is enclosed by a low railing covered with faded red, white and blue bunting. A number of mangy palms set about at intervals on the platform complete the decorative scheme. As to furniture,

GARDEN VARIETIES

there are five rickety chairs, a battered upright piano, and three cuspidors.

It is this platform—perhaps a survival of the mediæval minstrel's gallery—that is the setting of our play. As the curtain rises the HARMONY FIVE is busily putting the chills and fever into "The Bow-wow Blues." As the last measures of the composition are reached the VIOLIN, who is the leader, yells "Out!" to his co-workers, and with a final flourish the music stops. There is a spatter of applause from the dancers, who are never seen by the audience.

PIANO

How about an encore, Eddie?

VIOLIN (*collecting music sheets*)

Nix! They gotta want it worse than that.

PIANO

That number's all wet, anyway. It's oeen plugged all over town. Holton and Hare are using it this week up at Loew's Seventh Av'noo.

TRAPS

Yeh, and didja see the pannin' they got in *Variety*? It said they might have a chance on the big-time if it wasn't for their numbers.

VIOLIN

Well, if you ask me, in another year these 'here blue numbers'll be as outadate as free lunch.

SAXOPHONE (*lighting a cigarette*)

What we need is another "Bananas." There was a baby that knocked 'em for a row of ash cans! Am I right, Benny?

TRAPS

I'll say!

THE CASINO GARDENS

PIANO

Trouble to-day, you get a good number and them Tin-pan Alley butter and egg men down on Broadway do it on the records and radio, and where do we get off with a lousy five-piece outfit?

CORNET

Say, Harry, toss me one o' yer Lucky Strikes.

SAXOPHONE (*handing him cigarette*)

Lookit, fellas, Al's got the gimmies again. (*to AL*)
Ever try visitin' a United?

CORNET

I forgot to get a pack before I come up.

SAXOPHONE

That's good glue but it don't stick. . . . Forgot!

TRAPS

He forgot the way I forgot to pay my income tax.

CORNET

Aw, lay off the wise cracks.

VIOLIN

Al, reach over and flop the card over to a waltz, will yuh?

(*The CORNET meekly obeys.*)

PIANO

This crowd ought to tickle the Old Man. Looks like old times.

VIOLIN

You know why, doncha, Lew? Just like I said th' other night; whenever the Old Man loosens up and books Raoul to dance for him he packs 'em in.

PIANO (*examining an inflamed hangnail*)

He's tighter'n the skin on a grape.

GARDEN VARIETIES

SAXOPHONE

Can't see farther'n his nose.

VIOLIN

Give me the' runnin' of this joint for a year and I'd never hafta fiddle again.

TRAPS

You know so much; how'd you run things, Eddie?

VIOLIN

I'd book in Raoul and his new pardner to work here every night, permanent—

TRAPS

What'd you use for money?

VIOLIN

What if it did nick me a few berries? Ain't Raoul worth it? He's got more draw than any specialty dancer the Gardens ever had.

PIANO

Sure. All these frails are cuckoo over that Frenchman.

SAXOPHONE

He's not been doin' so well since Fantine give him the air. They say it took the heart out of his work.

VIOLIN

Never make a bit of diff'runce! I'll admit Fantine was as nifty a little hooper as ever stepped out on this floor. But her leavin' him can't cramp that boy's style. Not a chance!

TRAPS

It takes two to make a dancin' team. You gotta show me he's doin' as good work with his new pardner. What's her name—La Motte?

THE CASINO GARDENS

SAXOPHONE

What time do they go on, Eddie?

VIOLIN (*looking at his watch*)

The Old Man told me to stall along till I seen 'em come in. They're scheduled for 10:30. It'll prob'ly be after the next Moonlight.

PIANO (*who is nearsighted*)

Don't see Raoul out there in the crowd yet, do you?

TRAPS (*looking*)

Not a chance! You won't ketch him comin' up here early like he used and hang around talkin' to the guys—not after his trouble with Fantine.

SAXOPHONE

He sure was off his nut about that jane. Will you ever forget, Lew, how we'd see'm every night on our way home, sittin' there in the French Pastry—like a coupla love birds, they were. . . .

TRAPS

Yeh, but that was before they got married.

SAXOPHONE

Well, they was worse, if anything, after. There ain't many in the profession love as hard as that . . . almost like hate.

PIANO

Them Frenchmen are all like that, they tell me.

TRAPS (*after a pause*)

Women are the damndest fools! They don't appreciate honest-to-God love when they get a line on some of it.

SAXOPHONE

You said it, Benny! When Raoul took up with Fan-

tine, what was she? A little dumb-bell kike working nights in a Third Avenoo beanery. He just the same as took her out'n the gutter.

TRAPS (*sentimentally*)

But she was purty, and cute as they make 'em. And eyes! Say, she had eyes that 'ud draw ducks off a pond.

SAXOPHONE

True enough, but don't forget she'd still be in that hash-house if it wasn't for Raoul. Everything she knows about dancin' he taught her.

PIANO

Think Raoul 'ud ever take her back?

TRAPS

Not a chance! Them foreigners don't do things thataway.

SAXOPHONE

It's a wonder to me Raoul didn't wring that dirty home-wrecker's neck.

TRAPS

Er let him have one of them soft-nosed bullets out of a .38.

PIANO

Wouldn't surprise me to hear any time that that pasty-faced rat had left her flat.

SAXOPHONE

He'll have her sniffin' hop along with him before he's through. What gets me is what she ever seen in him in the first place.

TRAPS

Just like I said: women ain't got any brains. ~~Man-~~ tine didn't know when she *was* sittin' purty. B A

THE CASINO GARDENS

PIANO (*sighing*)

Well, Fantine or no Fantine, it'll sure seem good to be playin' that old Apachie number for Raoul again.

SAXOPHONE

God, the way he used to throw her around! It'd make the cold chills run up my spine just to watch him.

TRAPS

He kept her black and blue all right!

VIOLIN (*rising*)

All right, boys. We gotta earn our money. See what we can do with this one. Take it through twice and then go into "Lazy Daisy." Muffle yer brass, Al, until the second vamp. Let's go.

(The VIOLIN raps his bow on the railing, and the HARMONY FIVE wade into the glutinous waters of "Dreamy Melody." Above the music comes the rhythmic shuffle of hundreds of shoes and slippers gliding over the waxed floor. The warm, stale air is heavily laden with odors of cheap perfumery and cigarettes. As the orchestra finishes the waltz there is a prolonged and enthusiastic burst of applause. The VIOLIN applies resin to his bow; the SAXOPHONE tests a faulty valve; the TRAPS tightens a screw on his snare drum; the CORNET blows the moisture from his horn; the PIANO looks again at his hangnail. The applause continues.)

SAXOPHONE (*shouting above the noise*)

Let's give 'em "Sidewalks of Noo Yawk," Eddie!

VIOLIN

A. right. Let's lay on it! Chorus through twice!

GARDEN VARIETIES

(As the orchestra begins this classic song of the City, the lights in the hall grow dim, and a strong shaft of light from the balcony at the opposite end of the room plays upon the dancers. When the chorus begins a second time the dancers take up the immortal words:

“East Side, West Side,
All around the town;
Girls and boys together,
London Bridge is falling down,” etc.

After a rousing finale: lights and applause. The VIOLIN takes his seat and relights his cigarette butt, which he had tucked behind his ear. The SAXOPHONE and CORNET lay aside their instruments.)

VIOLIN (*mopping his brow*)

I dunno, but there's something about that number that always makes me sweat.

SAXOPHONE (*facetiously*)

How'dja like a nice cold stein of beer, Eddie, to cool you off?

TRAPS (*lighting a cigarette*)

Or a bottle of Bud, Eddie?

VIOLIN

Hell's bells! I ain't had a decent drink o' suds since the night the country went dry.

CORNET

I got some swell home brew under the sink up at the flat. The wife made it before she went to Haine's Falls with the kid.

VIOLIN

What good's that going to do me?

THE CASINO GARDENS

CORNET

I'll bring you boys around a coupla bottles to-morrow.

SAXOPHONE

Tie a string round yer finger, Al, so's you won't forget.

CORNET

Leave it to me. (*then cautiously*) How 'bout another one of them Luckies, Harry?

SAXOPHONE

I thought they was a catch in it somewheres. All right—here!

(*The SAXOPHONE hands the CORNET a cigarette.*)

VIOLIN (*looking out across the hall*)

There's a brace of natty bimbos over there. Never seen 'em before.

SAXOPHONE (*looking*)

Them with the sailor?

VIOLIN

Yeh, standin' near that palm.

TRAPS

Fer cryin' out loud, Eddie, if you think they're good-lookin' you need a pair of cheaters. I'll bet they're kitchen mechanics.

PIANO

That tall drink o' water looks like she was sent for and couldn't come!

VIOLIN

What's the matter with her? Yer too damn particular, Lew.

GARDEN VARIETIES

PIANO

Well, you ain't particular enough. You been married too long; you can't pick 'em no longer.

(This stunning repartee seems to have burnt itself out. The HARMONY FIVE gaze absently at the dancers standing about the hall, waiting for them to play.)

SAXOPHONE (*pointing suddenly*)

Jumpin' Jese! Look over there standin' by the check room!

TRAPS

I don't see nothin'.

SAXOPHONE

It's Fantine!

VIOLIN

What's eatin' you, Harry!

SAXOPHONE

Honest to God, it is!

VIOLIN

Standin' over there by herself? If that's Fantine, I'm a pickled herring.

TRAPS (*astounded*)

Harry's right. It's nobody else!

SAXOPHONE

Sure, I'm right. I guess I know Fantine when I see her.

TRAPS

Can you 'magine her comin' here? To-night of a' times!

CORNET

What you s'pose she wants? Catch her eye, Harry.

THE CASINO GARDENS

TRAPS

Naw, leave her be! Raoul's liable to be here any minute. . . .

PIANO

By God, do you know what she's up to? It's ten to one she's been ditched by that oil-can she run off with and she's come back here to-night to see if she can make it up with Raoul.

SAXOPHONE

Aw, she wouldn't have the guts!

TRAPS

Think Fantine might make a scene here when Raoul starts to dance?

PIANO

Why not—she ain't got nothin' to lose.

TRAPS

The Old Man 'ud throw 'er out so quick it would make her head swim!

SAXOPHONE

D'yuh really s'pose she's come back to try to make it up?

PIANO (*sagely*)

I don't think nothin' else! They all come back when they get down and out.

VIOLIN (*nudging the* SAXOPHONE)

Lookit! The Old Man's seen her, too! He's goin' over to speak.

SAXOPHONE

Well, can you beat that!

PIANO

He's shakin' hands like he was really glad to see her.

GARDEN VARIETIES

TRAPS

He oughta be! She's brought him enough business in her time.

VIOLIN (*apprehensively*)

If the Old Man's got any sense he'll get rid o' her before Raoul shows up.

TRAPS

Think there'd be trouble?

VIOLIN

Think! I know!

SAXOPHONE

Like as not Raoul wouldn't even let on he saw her.

PIANO

See! Some of the bunch er beginnin' to reco'nize Fantine.

VIOLIN

If the Old Man don't get her out of here it won't be long till the whole hall'll know she's come back.

SAXOPHONE

Look at that gang of simps millin' around her!

TRAPS

Ain't it just like I said: a trouble-makin' woman ain't satisfied to let a man alone when she's once throwed him over.

(Suddenly there comes from across the hall, near the entrance, the sound of cheers and applause, followed by cries of "Raoul!")

SAXOPHONE (*tensely*)

My God, there's Raoul comin' in now!

THE CASINO GARDENS

TRAPS

La Motte, his new pardner, with him, too.

(The applause and shouting continue.)

VIOLIN

If he was the Prince of Wales he couldn't get a bigger reception.

PIANO

There goes the Old Man over to meet him!

TRAPS

All I say is, Fantine better keep out'n Raoul's way.

VIOLIN

Funny, she don't come over to say hello to us.

TRAPS (*significantly*)

I guess she's got somethin' else on her mind.

(As RAOUL and his partner are escorted into the hall by the Old Man, the noise increases.)

CORNET

Wait! Just watch Fantine. . . .

TRAPS

Lookit! Raoul's saw her . . . and she's bowin' to him—

SAXOPHONE

Just like nothin' ever happened!

PIANO

Raoul don't fall for that kind of apple sauce.

TRAPS

He just seemed to stiffen up when he looked at her. Notice?

GÂRDEN VARIETIES

VIOLIN

Let's set down. There's enough excitement without us gettin' in it.

(*The HARMONY FIVE, which arose with the entrance of RAOUL, resumes its seats.*)

PIANO

What you s'pose Raoul and the Old Man are gassin' about so long over there?

SAXOPHONE

I'll bet it's somethin' about Fantine. . . . Look at the way she's actin'.

TRAPS

The Old Man's tryin' to quiet the crowd.

VIOLIN

Yeh, and havin' no luck at all!

PIANO

Shut up! He's goin' to make an announcement.

(*The cheering and commotion gradually diminish.*)

SAXOPHONE

Jese, look how handsome Raoul's lookin' standin' over there in his Apachie costume. Talk about Valentino. . . !

TRAPS

Sh—ssh! Lissen!

THE OLD MAN'S VOICE

Ladies and Gentlemun, I take great plea—shah tonight . . . in announcing . . . Raoul, the peer of ballroom dancers!

(*Wild applause and shouts.*)

PIANO

I'll say he is!

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THE CASINO GARDENS

VIOLIN

Keep still—cantcha!

THE OLD MAN'S VOICE

By special arrangement with the management . . . of the Casino Gardens . . . Mussere Raoul will be seen here to-night dancing with his old pardner, Fantine. (*Frantic applause.*) They will appear in their own original and famous underworld cre—ation . . . the Dance of the Parisian Apachies. . . . I thank you.

(*There is another burst of wild applause. The HARMONY FIVE look at each other in blank amazement.*)

VIOLIN (*shouting above the confusion*)

Raoul and Fantine—together again!

TRAPS

By God, the Old Man talked him into it. I guess *he's* not a showman!

SAXOPHONE

Did'ja ever hear 'em get such a reception? You can't hear yourself talk!

CORNET

It don't lissen good to me! Lookit how excited everybody's actin'.

(*The noise dies down gradually.*)

PIANO

I'm nervous as a damn wildcat, myself.

TRAPS

What's come over Raoul? She'll only double cross him again if he gives her the chance.

VIOLIN

Don't worry—he's not takin' her back. Not *that* Frenchman!

TRAPS (*in a whisper*)

Fantine's takin' her cape off—gettin' ready.

PIANO

What do you know! She had her Apachie dress on under her cloak all the time!

TRAPS

Just like I said: she come here just to make a play for him.

VIOLIN (*who has been watching intently for RAOUL's signal to begin*)

They're goin' out on the floor, boys! Raoul's ready! (*There is a deathly silence as the two exhibition dancers take their position in the center of the floor. The lights dim in the hall.*)

SAXOPHONE

There goes the spot light on 'em.

TRAPS

I just like to know what Raoul's thinkin' all this time.

SAXOPHONE

Well, he's mean enough lookin' with that cap pulled down and that red scarf around his stomick.

(*RAOUL, from the center of the floor, raises his hand, as a signal to the orchestra.*)

VIOLIN

There's our cue. Watch me, boys!

(*The VIOLIN raps his bow upon the railing, and the HARMONY FIVE commence the "Valse des Apaches." The orchestra needs no music sheets for this number. It devotes its attention to the two dancers.*)

PIANO (*after a few measures*)

Look at 'em go to it. That's what I call steppin'!

THE CASINO GARDENS

TRAPS

The're dancin' like never before!

VIOLIN (*awed*)

I hope to tell you they are!

TRAPS (*after a pause*)

That boy's an artist—you gotta hand it to 'um.

PIANO (*after another lapse*)

Jese, didja see him throw her from him then! You'd think he'd break every bone in her body!

TRAPS

That's a hard way to make a livin'. She's limp as a rag!

PIANO

And lookit how white and set his face is!

TRAPS

He'll be bitin' her next!

VIOLIN (*turning*)

Cut out that gab, cantcha!

(*For a few moments the three do not speak, absorbed in watching the dance.*)

TRAPS (*unable to control himself*)

What's he doin'! That ain't in the act!

PIANO (*terrified*)

He's diggin' his finger in her throat! By God, he's chokin' her!

TRAPS

He's killin' her!

(*A horrified murmur arises from the spectators about the hall; a woman screams. The "Valse des Apaches" stops short, and the HARMONY FIVE stare aghast at scene.*)

GARDEN VARIETIES

VIOLIN (*under his breath*)

Holy Christ!

TRAPS (*frantically shouting*)

He's murderin' her before our eyes! Stop him, you
boobs! Stop him!

VIOLIN (*taking him by the shoulders*)

Set down! Shut up!

(*There is the terrible sound of a body being thrown
violently upon the dance floor.*)

TRAPS

He's killed her! He's killed Fantine!

SAXOPHONE (*hysterically*)

Lookit him standin' there like a statue! Get him!

CORNET

God, she's bleeding at the mouth! She's done for!
(*There is the sound of many feet rushing out upon
the floor. The Casino Gardens is roaring with ex-
citement.*)

PIANO

Where're the bulls!

SAXOPHONE (*hoarsely*)

Lookit that mob grab for Raoul. He's a gonner!

TRAPS

They're carryin' the poor kid into the Ladies' Room!

CORNET

Hey, Eddie, the Old Man's yellin' for you!

PIANO

See him—he's gone crazy!

SAXOPHONE

He wants music!

THE CASINO GARDENS

VIOLIN

Come on—snap out of it! We gotta play. It's the only thing that'll quiet 'em. "Darktown Mamma" double time! Hit it up—give 'em all you got! Play like hell!

(The HARMONY FIVE begin to play wildly.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

(Initial Performance)

By the Community Players, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

With the following cast:

JIM THORNE	<i>Walter Grimes</i>
SADIE MONTROSE	<i>Melissa Joiner</i>
ALLEN PETTIBONE	<i>Fred Hammond</i>
HATTIE HALE	<i>Janet Farley</i>
ORIOLE	<i>Betty Ann Mathews</i>
WALLY WAMPLER	<i>B. F. Helmholtz</i>

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THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

JIM THORNE, *who plays Uncle Tom*

SADIE MONTROSE, *who plays Eliza*

ALLEN PETTIBONE, *who plays Legree*

HATTIE HALE, *who plays Little Eva*

ORIOLE, *her daughter*

WALLY WAMPLER, *proprietor of the troupe*

SCENE: *The star dressing room of the Opera House,
Ladoga, Indiana*

TIME: *Just after the evening performance*

It is a small triangular shaped room with a door, rear, leading to the wings. Along the right wall hangs a cracked mirror outlined in electric bulbs. Beneath the mirror is a shelf laden with various theatrical paraphernalia, including a battered make-up box. In the corner stands a wardrobe trunk, half open. Across its side is pasted the label: "Uncle Tom's Cabin Co." Down stage, left, is a screen which serves as a clothes rack. Before the screen stands a dilapidated sofa. The walls are whitewashed, and adorned with several faded lithographs of such past dramatic successes as "Peck's Bad Boy," "Lena Rivers," and "Eight Bells."

As the curtain rises the exit march is heard emanating from the auditorium. The dressing room is empty

save for a child of about eight who lies asleep on the sofa. It is ORIOLE, HATTIE's daughter. In a moment HATTIE HALE enters. Her small figure is draped in a flowing robe of white cheese cloth somewhat resembling a nightgown. To her back is fastened a pair of property angel's wings. She carries a gilded trumpet. She is Little Eva who has just been to heaven. Concerning HATTIE's age there is considerable doubt. The provincial audiences who watch her sicken and die each night know nothing of the art of make-up. HATTIE, however, does. Her eight-year-old daughter, coupled with the fact that this is her fifteenth season in the rôle of Eva, makes one suspect that HATTIE is not far from thirty.

HATTIE (to her offspring)

You awake, kid?

(Receiving no answer HATTIE sits down before the mirror and begins to remove her make-up. She is plainly elated over something, expressing herself somewhat inadequately by humming off key. As she unhooks the angel's wings there comes a knock at the door.)

HATTIE

Who is it?

JIM (off)

It's me, Hat. Who'd you expect—one of the bloodhounds!

HATTIE

Oh, come on in, Jim.

(Enters JIM THORNE. He is dressed as Uncle Tom, the faithful but much abused negro servitor. In spite of his senile make-up he seems rather young.)

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

JIM (*beaming at HATTIE*)

Well, how's my little blushing bride by now?

HATTIE (*rising*)

More in love with her Jim every minute.

JIM

That's the way I like to hear my Hattie talk!

HATTIE

Jim, why haven't you got out of your make-up? It always takes you so long.

JIM (*ecstatically*)

Why, Hat—I just had to come in and see you! You know, a while ago I stood out there in the wings while the transformation was on, and I'll say you looked like a *regular* angel!

HATTIE (*pleased*)

Honest, Jim?

JIM

On the level! Give us a kiss, Hat.

(HATTIE *kisses him.*)

HATTIE

I'm crazy about you, Jim, honey bug!

(*In their embrace a black smudge from his Uncle Tom make-up has rubbed off on her cheek.*)

JIM

Ha! Now look at yourself. You're all black!

HATTIE

I don't care. . . .

JIM (*pointing to their reflections in the mirror*)

Look, Hat, at us there in the glass. See that great big ugly darkey hugging a little white girl?

HATTIE

Looks like a case for the Ku Kluxers, don't it?

JIM (*sitting*)

Hand me your make-up towel, honey, and I'll fix it where I rubbed off on you. Here, sit on your Jim's knee, like a good little girlie.

HATTIE (*imitating Little Eva*)

Yes, Uncle Tom.

JIM

You're not sorry for what you did this afternoon, Hat?

HATTIE (*slapping him playfully*)

Who can tell if they're going to like their husband after only five hours of being married to him!

JIM

I'm not tooting my own horn, understand, but I bet I'll make you a better husband than Wally would of.

HATTIE

Jim, I never thought serious of marrying Wally Wampler, and you know it!

JIM

Just the same, you kept me in hot water thinking you might.

HATTIE (*patting him*)

Wally's been awful good to Oriole and me. But he's not my kind of a man.

JIM

Who is your kind of a man, then?

HATTIE (*hugging him*)

You know who!

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

JIM

Well, you're sure my kind of a woman, sweetheart. And if Wally wasn't manager of this troupe, I'd of had you married to me while we was still playing Ohio—instead of just this afternoon.

HATTIE (*seriously*)

Jim, we got to quit being so scared of Wally. Just because he's boss and does the hiring and firing don't mean he can run us outside the theater.

JIM

I know, Hat, but it don't pay to get him down on you. Look at the way he razzed Maude and Freddie out of the show last season.

HATTIE

He wouldn't dare let two good performers like us go, even if he wanted to. How much of a show do you think he'd have left?

JIM (*convinced*)

That's right, Hat. We're the backbone of this troupe.

HATTIE

He don't scare me with all his big talk and bluff.

JIM

Well, I've about made up my mind if it leaks out that we're married and he starts acting up, I'm going to stand right up to him and speak my mind.

HATTIE

It's the only way to handle these managers. They respect you for it.

JIM

Besides, honey, if he does give us notice for having got married, I guess we won't starve. You know we

got that fruit farm my old man left me up there in Berrien County, Michigan, to fall back on.

HATTIE

Of course we have, Jim.

JIM

I can always make a living for you and Oriole up there—if I have to.

HATTIE

You know, Jim, I couldn't help thinking when we were standing there being married in that pretty little parsonage, how nice it would be if we was to go up to that farm right off, and settle down and have a home and everything, with you raising fruit.

JIM

It sure would be nice, honey. But remember, we're saving that for our old age.

HATTIE

Sometimes, Jim, I feel awfully old, now. I don't feel easy any more, playing Eva. It's enough to make a dog sick when I get out there and pipe around. I don't want to be like Carrie Fountaine—die of old age in the part.

JIM

Don't let that fret you. You're still the prettiest, sweetest Eva I know anything about! (*She starts to embrace him.*) No, hon, don't kiss me again now. I just got you wiped off from last time.

HATTIE (*rising from his lap*)

Better run along and get into your street clothes, so's we can get on over to the car.

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

JIM

All right. I'll come back and we'll go across the street for a plate of ham and eggs . . . our wedding supper.

HATTIE

Heard yet what time we pull out to-night?

JIM

One of the crew was saying we'd get out of the yards by one.

HATTIE

I better wake up Oriole now, so's you won't have to carry her. You know how limp and cross she gets, poor kid.

JIM (*looking down at ORIOLE*)

Hope we can keep her from calling me Pop—at least around Wally.

HATTIE

If she gives us away I'll knock her block off. And I told her so, too!

(*There is a knock at the door.*)

ALLEN (*off*)

It's Al. Can I come in?

JIM

Sure, Al! Come ahead. . . .

(*Enters ALLEN PETTIBONE, who plays Legree with the company. He is wearing his street clothes, but an investigation would reveal grease paint still behind his ears. Without his villain's make-up he is a mild-mannered fellow—almost effeminate.*)

ALLEN (*cordially*)

Well, how are the love birds by this time?

HATTIE

Haven't scratched yet, have we, Jim?

JIM

Not so you could notice it!

ALLEN (*glancing at the sleeping ORIOLE*)

What'd the kid say, Hat, when you told her she had a new papa?

HATTIE

She just asked me for a piece of candy, and rolled over and went to sleep.

JIM

She's too young to realize what it means.

ALLEN

Well, I'll say she's got an A-I daddy this time.

HATTIE

Thanks, Al. You and Sadie are the two best pals a woman ever had.

JIM

That goes for me, too, Al. And I want to thank you again for standing up with us. I hope I can do the same for you some time.

ALLEN

Glad to do it—glad to do it. . . .

JIM (*largely*)

Married life's the only life, believe me!

ALLEN

Sure Wally never got wind of what went on this afternoon?

HATTIE

So far as we know he hasn't. You heard that preacher promise he wouldn't give us away, didn't you?

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

ALLEN

I know, but I'd be breathing easier if we were on our way to the next stand. This is a mighty small burg, and such things as weddings get around mighty quick.

JIM

Nobody's going to run up to Wally and tell him—even if they do know it.

ALLEN

Well, here's hoping. Guess I'll be moving along down to the car. Pull out at one, you know.

(As ALLEN opens the door SADIE MONTROSE enters. She is dowdy and middle-aged, looking more like a seamstress than an actress. However, she has been doing one-night stands practically all her life. And as Eliza, she has crossed the ice no less than five thousand times.)

SADIE (*excitedly*)

Wally been in here yet?

JIM

Why, no—what's up?

HATTIE

Is he coming back stage?

SADIE

Dearie, I don't want to throw a scare into you, but I think he's wise.

ALLEN

You mean he knows they got married!

SADIE

I was out front just now signing an I.O.U., and he was fit to be tied about something.

GARDEN VARIETIES

JIM

What'd he say?

SADIE

All I heard was: "Those two've turned their last trick on me!"

HATTIE

That all?

ALLEN

What more do you expect?

SADIE

He kicked over a chair and yelled, "I'll teach 'em to make a monkey outa my show!"

ALLEN

My God!

HATTIE (*hoping against hope*)

You don't *know* he was talking about Jim and me, though.

SADIE

No, not sure. But I hurried back here to let you know, so in case it was you'd be ready.

JIM

That big bag of wind better not start anything around here.

ALLEN

Sadie, we better make ourselves scarce—just in case. . . .

SADIE

You're right, Al. We can't help you folks by mixing in. Shall I take Oriole with me?

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

HATTIE

No, she's still asleep. No need to get excited as I can see. I've watched these man-eating managers perform before!

SADIE

You know how mean Wally can be when he takes a notion!

HATTIE

They're all a bluff if you face them down

ALLEN

Sadie and me will be outside waiting if you need us.

SADIE

Well, good luck Hat, and don't say anything you'll be sorry for.

(ALLEN and SADIE *exeunt*.)

HATTIE

Now, Jim, you hustle along to your dressing room and get out of that make-up just as if nothing was going to happen.

JIM

What, and leave you here to face him alone?

HATTIE

I can handle him—I'd rather talk to him alone.

JIM

What if he begins to insult you?

HATTIE

Never you mind. I've been insulted by better managers than Wally Wampler. Go on, Jim—please!

JIM

I hate to have you fight it out with him.

HATTIE

Just leave him to me—I'm not scared. . . .

JIM

I'll be listening, hon, and if he pulls any rough stuff just call. I'll come back and mop up the floor with him!

(JIM goes out. HATTIE sits before the mirror applying cold cream to her make-up. On the couch ORIOLE stirs, then sits up, rubs her eyes and whimpers. She is a typical stage child, anæmic and pimply.)

HATTIE

It's all right, Baby, mamma's about ready. . . .

ORIOLE

Ain't it time to go down to the car, Mamma?

HATTIE

Don't say "ain't," Pet—we're going in just a minute now. . . . Lay down and rest some more.

(ORIOLE obeys whiningly. HATTIE removes her costume and gets into her street dress. She is thus engaged when there comes a knock at the door.)

HATTIE *(cautiously)*

Come in.

(Enters WALLY WAMPLER, a pop-eyed, heavy-set man wearing a soiled suit of black and white checks. His hair looks too sleek not to be a toupee.)

WALLY

H'lo, Hat.

HATTIE *(trying to be calm)*

How're you, Wally?

WALLY

Su'prised to see me?

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

HATTIE

I sort of expected a visit from you, now you ask me.

WALLY

Somebody tip you off?

HATTIE

I'm not saying.

WALLY

What's all this I hear about you and Jim?

HATTIE

How should I know what you're hearing?

WALLY (*angrily*)

Aw, might as well can the stallin', Hat. I gotcha cold.

HATTIE

Have you?

WALLY

You know what I mean! About you and Jim gettin' married!

(WALLY'S voice has risen so that ORIOLE is aroused. She begins to cry.)

HATTIE

See what you did with your loud mouth! (*Tenderly.*) Go to sleep again, Oriole, sweetheart. . . . Mamma won't be long now.

ORIOLE

I want some candy, Mamma.

HATTIE

No, darling—not to-night.

ORIOLE

But, Mamma, I *want* some!

GARDEN VARIETIES

HATTIE

Hush, Oriole!

(ORIOLE *starts to cry again.*)

WALLY (*exasperated*)

For God's sake, give her some to shut her up!

HATTIE

Just one piece then, Pet. In the top of Mamma's trunk.

(ORIOLE *crosses to trunk and returns licking a large stick of molasses taffy.*)

WALLY (*getting back to the issue*)

Well, Hat, let's have it. What've you and Jim gotta say for yourself?

HATTIE

Nothing. We're not ashamed of it!

WALLY

Well, you oughta be! You sneak out to a preacher when my back's turned, like a coupla love-sick calves. . . !

HATTIE

Since when do we have to ask your permission?

WALLY

I never heard of anything to beat it, and I've had out a Tom show for the last twenty years.

HATTIE

What's the odds?

WALLY

Odds! I'll tell you the odds. How much business you s'pose we'll do, when we blow in a burg and gets 'round to the customers that Tom and Ex

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

man and wife? Uncle Tom and Little Eva married!
Damned if it's not immoral!

HATTIE (*sharply*)

I'll thank you not to curse before my child!

WALLY

It's enough to make a preacher swear.

HATTIE

I'll tell you what's wrong with you, Wally. You're just mad because I took Jim instead of you.

WALLY

You hate yourself, don't you?

HATTIE

I guess I can tell the truth when I see it. Why don't you be a good sport and leave Jim and me be?

(*There is a pause, during which WALLY comes closer to her.*)

WALLY

I won't say I don't care a lot for you, Hat. And even now. . . .

HATTIE (*bristling*)

Don't forget I'm a married woman. . . !

WALLY

I can't forget you threw yourself away on a ham actor. I gave you credit for having more sense.

HATTIE

Take care how you talk about Jim, Wally Wampler!
(*WALLY decides to take a new tack.*)

WALLY

Well, all I can say is, Hat, you're all washed up as long as your career is concerned.

GARDEN VARIETIES

HATTIE (*with a touch of pride*)

Jim and me don't have to act for a living. He's got a fruit farm up in Michigan.

WALLY

You two 'ud be a riot runnin' a fruit farm!

HATTIE

And I can always come back in the business if I get tired of it.

WALLY

They never come back. I seen what marryin' does for a performer. You begin eatin' too much, sleepin' too much, and before you know it you're fat. And in a coupla years' time you're sloppy and middle-age.

(HATTIE has crossed to the sofa and sits with her arm about her child, who is still effectively pacified by the taffy.)

HATTIE

Haven't I earned a rest? Since I was twelve I've been living out of a trunk, playing under canvas, in town halls, skating-rinks and one-horse theaters like this—and eating in beaneries that wasn't fit for a hog. I'm sick of it. . . . I've earned a rest.

WALLY

All right, sister, hop to it! Only don't say I didn't warn you.

HATTIE

What I want worse than anything is a home; a place where I can spread out and do my own cooking and make my own beds, and do all those things that women are supposed to do.

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

WALLY

You'd sing a diff'rent tune after a year on a God-forsaken farm.

(There is a knock at the door.)

JIM *(off)*

About ready, Hat?

HATTIE *(rising)*

Come on in, Jim.

(JIM enters, dressed in his street clothes. WALLY looks him up and down contemptuously.)

WALLY

I s'pose you feel quite proud of yourself for what you done this afternoon.

JIM

If you mean marrying Hat, I certainly am.

WALLY

Well, mebbe you won't feel so good when I tell you my wedding present to you is your notice.

HATTIE *(aghast)*

His notice! How do you figure that out?

WALLY

I ain't goin' to have a coupla honeymooners playin' Tom and Eva with *my* show. Not as long as I'm still in my right mind.

HATTIE

Wally, you're meaner'n I thought you was!

JIM

Well, I won't accept a notice, do you hear?

WALLY

Oh, you won't, won't you!

GARDEN VARIETIES

JIM

No! I resign. Now that I've got a wife I've made up my mind to leave the road anyway.

WALLY

Huh! It'll be an awful loss to the perfession!

HATTIE

Are you trying to pick a fight?

JIM

He can't bluff me. I don't have to take his lip. I got a fruit farm up in—

WALLY

Michigan. Yeh, I heard all about that!

HATTIE

You fire Jim Thorne and I go, too!

WALLY

You'll go right on playin' Eva, my fine lady—married or no married.

HATTIE

Oh, is that so!

WALLY

You forgot, I s'pose, I gotta season contract with you!

JIM

You can't hold her against her will.

WALLY

We'll see what the law says about that.

HATTIE (*frightenedly*)

You know you can't, Wally.

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

WALLY

Can't I? Say, you break your contract with me and I'll sue you. So help me I will!

HATTIE (*flaring up*)

Shame on you, Wally—coming between man and wife!

(JIM sees that he is cornered, and decides that it is best to conciliate.)

JIM

Now, lookie here, Wally. No use getting all worked up about this thing. Let's reason it out.

WALLY

I'm willin' to lissen to reason. But Hat don't leave—that's final!

(ORIOLE begins to whimper again.)

ORIOLE

Ain't it time to go down to the car, Mamma?

HATTIE (*severely*)

One more crack out of you, Oriole, and I'll spank you!

JIM

Wally, if I could produce an Eva to take Hat's place to work out the rest of her contract, will you let Hat go without making any trouble?

WALLY

What do you want to do—pick up some stage-struck jane and ring her in on me?

M

No, I'm on the level. I've got somebody in mind. Will you?

WALLY

I'll think about it. . . .

HATTIE

You better think hard, Wally. If I haven't my heart in my work I'm liable to crab the show.

JIM

Ssh, Hat! All right, Wally, here's what I'm offering you—Oriole.

WALLY

Oriole!

JIM

Why not give Oriole a shot at the part?

WALLY (*snorting*)

Say, you'd make a horse laugh!

JIM

You don't think she could handle it, do you? Well, you don't know.

WALLY

She couldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole!

HATTIE

That's all you know about it!

JIM

She's just the right age, got the voice, looks—everything.

WALLY

Did you ever hear of an eight-year-old kid playin' Eva? I ask you!

JIM

That's *supposed* to be her age in the script. It would be something novel and original.

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

HATTIE

Don't worry. Oriole could do it, but I don't know as I'd want her to.

JIM

It'd only be till your contract runs out. Besides, Sadie'll look out for her.

HATTIE (*to ORIOLE*)

What do you say, darling, to being an actress like Mamma?

ORIOLE

I don't wanta!

JIM

Sure you do, Baby!

HATTIE

Just think, Oriole, you'd get pretty lace dresses and ride in the pony cart every day in the parade!

ORIOLE (*only mildly interested*)

Could I have lots of candy—

JIM

Sure you could!

ORIOLE

Whenever I wanted it?

HATTIE

Maybe you could, Pet.

ORIOLE

Well, then, I'd like to be an actress, Mamma.

JIM (*triumphantly*)

Hear that, Wally! The kid says she *wants* to be an actress.

WALLY

Yeh, but that don't make her one!

JIM

Well, Oriole's got the goods. You tell him, Hat.

HATTIE

She knows Eva as well as I do—every if, and, and but.

JIM

She's learned it just standing in the wings, watching Hat work.

WALLY

You gotta show me—I'm from Missouri. . . .

JIM

Put her through the deathbed scene, Hat. Go on—show him we're right.

HATTIE

Oriole, be like Mamma. Start in where I say: "And is Heaven all full of gold streets and angels"—you remember.

ORIOLE

I don't feel like it, Mamma

HATTIE

Oriole!

ORIOLE (*yawning*)

I'm too sleepy. . . .

JIM

Do this nice for your Mamma, and I'll give you a pretty present when we get back to the car.

HATTIE (*going over to her daughter*)

Oriole, stretch out flat on the couch. Take little

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

short breaths like Mamma showed you. Roll your eyes.

JIM

I'll feed her the cues, Hat.

WALLY (*sitting—interested in spite of himself*)

Well, I'm from Missouri. . . .

HATTIE

All right, Jim—start in.

(HATTIE stands by anxiously watching her daughter during the ensuing scene. WALLY lights a cigar.)

JIM (*assuming the rôle of Uncle Tom*)

"Dat's all dar in de good book, jes' like I tol' you, Little Eva."

ORIOLE (*in a high wavering voice*)

"And is Heaven all full of gold streets and angels, Uncle Tom?"

JIM (*kneeling by sofa*)

"Yes, Little Eva, angels wid big white wings and carryin' harps."

ORIOLE

"Will I have a harp when I go to Heaven, Uncle Tom?"

JIM (*business with handkerchief*)

"Don't talk dat way, Little Eva, yer breakin' my ole heart."

ORIOLE

"I hope you will always be a good man, Uncle Tom, and never do anything to vex your master. . . . Why is everything growing so dark, Uncle Tom? Is it evening. . . ? I can hear bells ringing afar off."

(*Uncle Tom is wracked with sobs.*)

GARDEN VARIETIES

ORIOLE (*tremolo stop wide open*)

"Uncle Tom, I'm going far away. . . . I can hear the angels singing. Tell Topsy to be a good girl for my sake. Tell my Mamma to kiss my papa good-by for me. Good-by, Uncle Tom. . . . Good-by. I will meet you all in Heaven. . . ."

(ORIOLE *sinks back upon her pillow.*)

JIM (*rising from his knees*)

What'd I tell you, Wally!

WALLY

By God, the kid's there! She made chills go up my back.

JIM

Sure puts new life in that old hokum, don't she?

HATTIE (*hugging ORIOLE*)

She's her Mamma's precious, that's what she is!

WALLY (*to ORIOLE*)

Come here, kid, and give your Uncle Wally a big kiss.

ORIOLE

I don't wanta be kissed! I wanta go to bed!

HATTIE

Now is that a nice way to act?

WALLY

Kiss or no kiss, she's some swell little trouper.

JIM

Didn't we say she could do it?

WALLY

All right. You win.

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

JIM (*eagerly*)

And will you let her play out Hat's contract?

WALLY

Let her! Would I let Mary Pickford! Say, she'll knock 'em off their seats!

HATTIE

Funny, you never noticed it before to-night.

WALLY

Wait till we get her dolled up in your angel outfit. She'll make it a transformation scene worth look-in' at.

HATTIE (*irrelevantly*)

She eats too much candy.

JIM

It's in her blood to act. No more keep that youngun off the stage than fly.

WALLY

Hat, I'll bet she'll show you how the part oughta be played.

HATTIE (*piqued*)

Oh, I don't know about that. . . .

WALLY

Give her a week and she'll make you look like thirty cents.

HATTIE

Are you trying to tell me she can play Eva better than I can?

WALLY

Judgin' from the sample she handed us a while ago, I'd say she could.

GARDEN VARIETIES

HATTIE (*wrathfully*)

That's gratitude for you! Here, I've been slaving for you season after season in the part and now you say I'm a flop!

WALLY

Back up—I never said no such thing!

HATTIE

You did so! I can play Eva as well as anybody living!

JIM

Don't take him serious, Hat. He's just trying to get your goat.

HATTIE

If Oriole plays Eva, it'll be over my dead body!
(*She flings herself on the sofa which ORIOLE has lately vacated, bursting into hysterical tears.*)

JIM (*going to her*)

Brace up, Hat. . . . Wally didn't mean anything. . . .

WALLY (*half to himself*)

By God, if she ain't jealous of her own kid!

JIM

Come on, honey. . . . You're all nerves—let's get out in the air.

HATTIE (*sobbing*)

Leave me be!

(*To add to the confusion, ORIOLE begins to cry out of sympathy.*)

WALLY

Say, hire a hall! This ain't a funeral!

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

JIM (*helplessly*)

What can I do, Wally? It's a madhouse. . . !

WALLY (*aside to JIM*)

Take the kid outside. Leave Hat to me—I'll fix it up.
(*Without another word JIM takes ORIOLE by the hand and leads her out of the room. As he goes out he casts a look at his weeping bride, shaking his head dejectedly.*)

WALLY (*after a moment*)

Hat, come on—turn off the waterworks. (*She continues to sob.*) Hat!

HATTIE (*sniffling*)

What do you want?

WALLY (*after another pause*)

I've changed my mind—you and Jim can finish playin' out the season.

HATTIE

You was just kidding—about Oriole!

WALLY

Sure. . . . You know, Hat, Jim ain't the only one that's fell for you. . . .

HATTIE (*a little ashamed of herself*)

You understand, Wally, why I acted up when you wanted Oriole to take my place—

WALLY (*largely*)

Sure, I understand.

HATTIE

What kind of a mother would I be if I went off and left her to do my work for me?

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SO THIS IS PARIS GREEN!

(Initial Performance)

At B. F. Keith's Lyric Theater, Richmond, Virginia

With the following cast:

MIMI	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Marie Cahill
BOBO	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	St. Clair Hales
PIERRE	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Curtis Cooksey

Under the direction of Daniel V. Arthur

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SO THIS IS PARIS GREEN!

(A Grand Guignol burlesque)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MIMI, *a girl Apache*

BOBO, *her husband*

PIERRE, *her lover*

SCENE: *A miserable garret in the Rue Morgue, Paris.
In the room are several rude chairs and a table. A
cupboard stands center, rear. The room is inade-
quately illuminated by a candle flickering in the neck
of a beer bottle on the table.*

CURTAIN MUSIC: "*Mon Homme*."

AT RISE: MIMI and PIERRE are discovered in each
other's arms. Clock off strikes twelve.

MIMI (*apprehensively*)

Midnight! You must go, my little Pierre.

PIERRE

He'll be here soon, your fine husband—your Bobo?

MIMI

He must not catch us napping.

PIERRE (*tapping his chest proudly*)

Ah, but Mimi, I do not fear your husband. Pierre,
the Gutter Rat, fears no man!

MIMI

But you do not know my Bobo. You forget he is the *King* of Apaches. One night he caught Gaston here. Do you know what he did? Tied him to a chair and tickled him to death. It was horrible!

PIERRE (*defiantly*)

But I am not ticklish—like Gaston!

MIMI

Then, there was Anatol. . . .

PIERRE (*impressed*)

Anatol! What became of him?

MIMI (*shuddering*)

Do not ask me—I become faint when I think of it. Enough to say—the sewers of Paris echo no longer with Anatol's gay laughter.

PIERRE

Still would I face him, your Bobo.

MIMI

You must not—for my sake. Not only will he kill you but he will beat me. And I bruise so easily, my little Pierre.

PIERRE (*with suddenness*)

There remains but one thing to do—the powder!

MIMI (*in an affrighted whisper*)

Poison!

PIERRE (*taking cachet from pocket*)

A little of this in his wine and—Phut! for the King of the Apaches!

MIMI (*thoughtfully*)

I suppose I could just dust a little over his tripe.

PIERRE (*puzzled*)

Tripe, my Mimi?

MIMI

Bobo never goes to bed without his plate of tripe. It's on the fire now. Wait! (*Goes off, returning with a big iron pot.*) Here it is. All ready for him.

PIERRE (*sniffing hungrily*)

How good it smells!

MIMI (*coily*)

I am a good cook if I do say so myself.

PIERRE (*tasting*)

Sacré nom de pipe! It's a shame to spoil the taste with this powder.

MIMI

Bobo likes things spicy. Give it to me. (*He hands her the cachet.*) I'll put it all in.

PIERRE

Not all, my Mimi. A few grains will do the work.

MIMI

Aha! But my Bobo is a tough baby!
(*She shakes all the powder into the pot, and sets it on the cupboard.*)

PIERRE

In one hour there will be no Bobo! We shall be free—free!

MIMI (*clinging to him*)

You and I, Pierre—with the whole world before us. Only now shall we begin to live—really live. I want to travel, see new scenes, new faces. I'm sick to death with the sewers of Paris—I want to try London, Rome, Berlin. . . .

PIERRE (*catching her enthusiasm*)
New York!

MIMI

I hear there are some beautiful sewers in New York.

PIERRE (*passionately*)
My little cabbage!

MIMI

My Hairy Ape!

PIERRE

My Woman of Paris!

MIMI (*ecstatically*)

My Plaster of Paris!

(*There is a heavy tread in the hall. They both stand frozen in horror.*)

PIERRE

Bobo!

MIMI

Mon Dieu! Quick! Hide!

PIERRE

Where?

MIMI

In there—under the bed!

(*PIERRE rushes out, as BOBO comes in. He is a huge hulk of a man—a true Apache in black corduroy, cap, and red sash about his middle. He carries a bottle of wine and stands in the doorway looking menacingly at MIMI.*)

BOBO (*bellowing*)

Come here!

(*MIMI sidles up to him with easy defiance.*)

MIMI

Yes, my Bobo.

(BOBO aims a terrific blow at her which she dodges. She runs to the other side of the table, where he catches her.)

BOBO

I'm going to choke you till your eyes bulge out!

MIMI

Don't choke me, Bobo—I've got sore throat.

BOBO (*disgustedly flinging her aside*)

Aw, I'm sick of yuh! I don't even enjoy chokin' you any more!

MIMI (*pouting*)

That means you don't love me any more.

BOBO (*striking her again*)

Take that then!

MIMI (*smiling groggily*)

You make me so happy!

BOBO

Where's my tripe?

MIMI

It's all ready for you. All ready, my Bobo. My big boy will like it to-night. I was especially careful in preparing it. Sit down and rest till I get you a plate and spoon.

(MIMI goes off with a low, sinister laugh. Immediately BOBO goes to cupboard, takes out a large green bottle and looks at it exultingly. Quickly he pours contents of bottle into wineglass and fills it with wine from the bottle he brought in. He murmurs, "Poison! This will finish her!" Laughs and pours

himself some wine. Hides bottle under the table. Sits down, pulls a copy of La Vie Parisienne from his pocket, and begins to read.)

MIMI (*setting tripe pot before him*)

There you are, Precious. Eat all you want. There's lots more where that came from.

BOBO (*showing poisoned wine toward her*)

Have some wine!

(*Without further ado, BOBO props the copy of La Vie Parisienne before him and wolfs down the tripe, his eyes glued on the paper. MIMI catches a glance in the direction of the room in which her lover is hidden. She toys with the glass of wine, but does not drink it at once.*)

MIMI

Any news in the paper, honey? (BOBO's answer is a hoarse growl.) Didums have a hard day to-day? It looks all tired out! (BOBO growls louder.) How's business?

BOBO

Rotten! I strangled Count Goosebaum to-night and found only a franc on him. There's nothing in the nobility any more. They're all broke!

MIMI

Dear! Dear! Living's so high here in Paris, too! You know, I paid fifty sous for eggs this morning. What are we coming to!

(*He growls, still absorbed in paper.*)

MIMI

How do you like your tripe, my Bobo?

BOBO

Too damn salty! (*seeing her wineglass untouched*)
Why the devil don't you drink your wine?

MIMI

I was waiting for you, sweetheart.

BOBO

Drink it now! Bottom's up—come on.

MIMI (*lifting glass*)

Here's to your health!

(*Drinks.*)

BOBO (*drinking with her*)

It's a new brand—makes you forget your troubles.

(*Laughs.*) How do you like it?

MIMI (*suspiciously*)

It tastes bitter. . . .

BOBO (*gloating*)

It tastes bitter, does it?

(*He bursts into a tremendous guffaw. He is so overpowered with laughter that he gets up. She watches him, uneasily. Suddenly his expression changes. He stops laughing and clutches his stomach.*)

BOBO

That tripe!

MIMI

I'll get you some more.

BOBO (*writhing*)

You she-devil! You put something in my tripe!

MIMI

You know you always like things spicy.

BOBO (*falling into chair*)

Oh, my stomach!

MIMI

Shall I get you a little bicarbonate of soda?

GARDEN VARIETIES

BOBO

Everything is going round. I'm paralyzed. . . . I'm dying!

MIMI

Yes, Bobo. You're dying.

BOBO

You poisoned me!

MIMI

You've guessed it, my Bobo.

BOBO

Killed me—your husband! Where do you think you are—in New York!

MIMI (*with venom*)

I'm in heaven—now that I'm going to be rid of you. I've been your punching bag long enough. I'm going to be free of you at last!

BOBO (*laughing fiendishly*)

Don't be so sure of that!

MIMI

What do you mean?

BOBO

Two can play this trick. The joke's on you. That wine you drank was poison—poison!

MIMI

You lie!

BOBO

Remember that bottle of Paris green you had in the cupboard? It now lies under the table—empty. Hah, haha. . . .

MIMI

Oh, my God!

BOBO

You drank enough to kill every parasite in Paris.
. . . Oh! (*In convulsions.*) Good-by, old girl; may
we rot together in Hell!

(*He has a sudden spasm, reels dizzily and falls across
the table and dies.*)

MIMI (*clutching herself*)

Oh, I've got it—I'm going! Pierre! Pierre!
(*PIERRE rushes in.*) Pierre, he got me—he got me!

PIERRE

What is it, Mimi?

MIMI

He's poisoned me, too. Paris green—I drank enough
to kill a parachute!

PIERRE

Is there nothing we can do!

MIMI

Nothing, my Pierre. Just let me die in your arms.

PIERRE

Don't, sweetheart, don't . . . !

MIMI (*plaintively*)

And I'm too young to die. Life was sweet. Even
with Bobo life was sweet. What a pleasant time we
had—chokings and crime and lovely murders. And
I'm leaving it all—alone. . . .

PIERRE

Not alone, Mimi. I shall go with you.

MIMI

Don't say that, Pierre!

GARDEN VARIETIES

PIERRE

There's nothing to live for now. Where is that bottle?
I want to die, too.

MIMI (*with Ethel Barrymore pathos*)

Thank you, Pierre. It's sweet of you to want to
keep me company. You'll find the bottle on the floor.
Maybe you'll find a swallow left.

(PIERRE *picks up the bottle from under the table,*
looks at the label.)

PIERRE

Why, this isn't Paris green!

MIMI

No?

PIERRE

It says—green soap.

MIMI (*reviving*)

He got the wrong bottle! Thank God, I married a
man who couldn't read!

(*They embrace passionately.*)

THE CURTAIN MERCIFULLY DESCENDS

